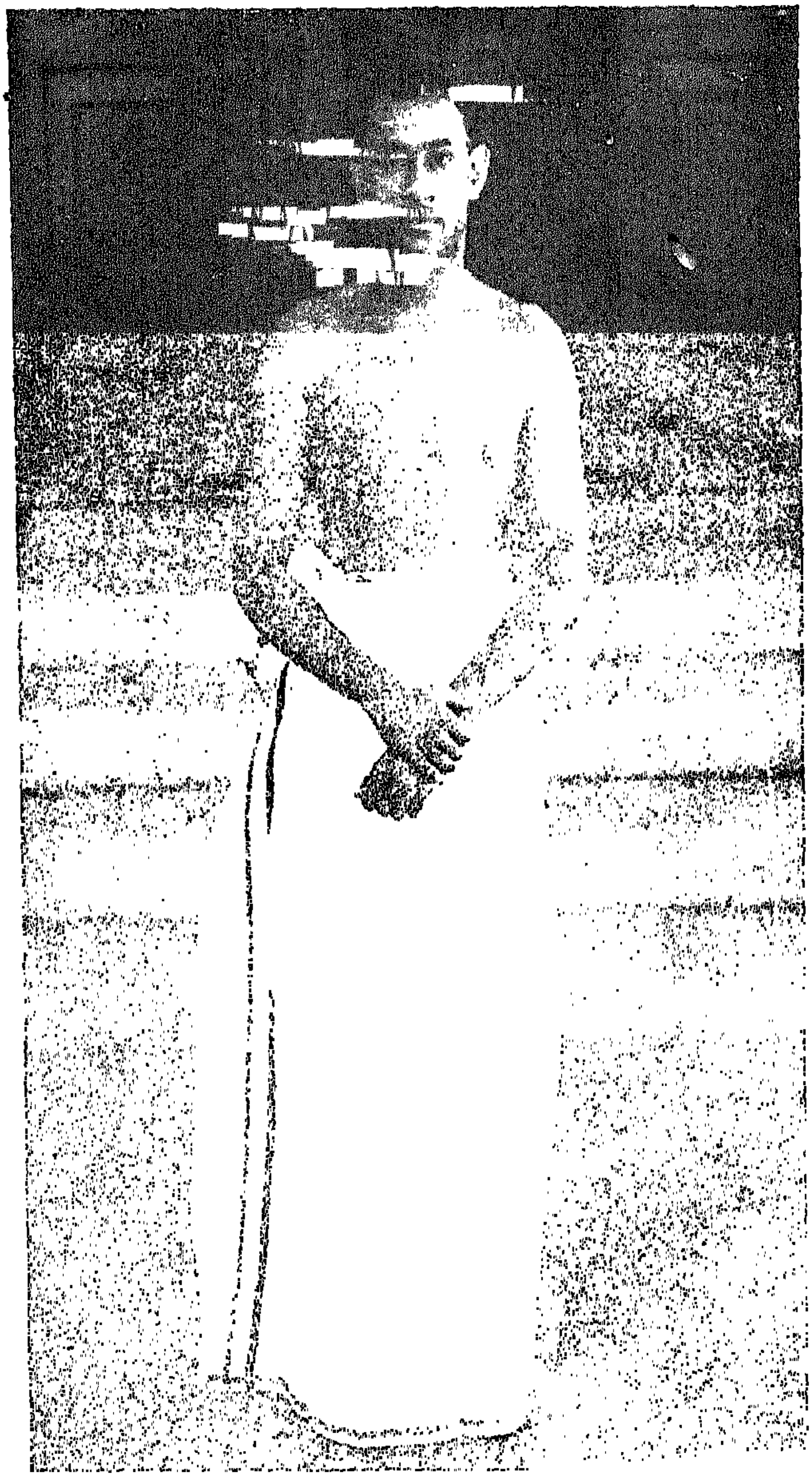


THE EPIC OF TRAVANCORE

BY
MAHADEV DESAI

"I verily believe that when all else about Travancore is forgotten, this one act of the Maharajah—the Proclamation—will be remembered by future generations with gratitude." —GANDHIJI

NAVAJIVAN KARYALAYA

First published 1937

Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai,
Navajivan Karyalaya, Gandhi Road, Ahmedabad
Printed by Balubhai Maganlal Desai,
Mani Mudranalaya, Kalupur, Ahmedabad

To Travancore

The Proclamation

"Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all-comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has throughout the centuries adapted itself to the need of the changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth, caste or community, be denied the consolation and solace of the Hindu Faith, we have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering or worshipping at temples controlled by us and our Government."

PREFACE

I am indebted to Srimati Sarojini Naidu for the title of the book. Soon after our pilgrimage to Travancore she happened to pass through Wardha and had summoned me to see her at the station. She was full of praise for what had happened in Travancore, and said in her characteristic way: "What has happened is of an epic character. And no doubt the Epic Fast was not undertaken in vain."

The seven chapters in the first part briefly summarise the struggle for the abolition of untouchability in Travancore. The second part contains Gandhiji's speeches—an important discourse given in 1925, three speeches made in 1927, three speeches during that memorable Harijan Campaign of 1933–34, and all the 27 speeches during the last pilgrimage to Travancore. "It is God alone who can arm the word that I speak to you with the power to shoot like an arrow and make a lodgment in your heart," he said in the course of his speech at Trivandrum in 1934. "If you can believe the word of a man who is perpetually seeking after truth, believe me that throughout all my waking hours, and if I can say so, during my sleep also, my one constant prayer to God is that He may give that power to my words, so that the Hindu heart may be touched and it may be purged of the virus of untouchability

and Hindus and Hinduism may be saved from the impending doom."

There is no doubt in my mind that the Travancore Proclamation was in answer to this prayer. The ten days of pilgrimage in January this year were linked each to each in prayer and piety. May that prayer be answered furthermore is the prayer of one who was privileged to be a humble participant in that pilgrimage.

I dedicate this brief history of one of the most nonviolent struggles for religious emancipation to the people who carried it through so bravely and so nobly.

Wardha
12th March 1937

MAHADEV DESAI

P. S.: I am indebted to Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar and the Archaeological and Devaswam Departments of the State for the photographs and for plenty of valuable information placed at my disposal. Much of the information about temples is drawn from Shri Nagammayya's valuable Travancore Manual and from a note drawn up for me by the Archaeological Department and revised by Rao Saheb Mahakavi Ulloor Parameshwar Aiyar.

M. D.

CONTENTS

MAP AND ILLUSTRATIONS

PART I

I

TRAVANCORE — A PUZZLE

With an area of 7,625 square miles (its extreme length from North to South being 174 miles, and its extreme width 75 miles), with the Western Ghats isolating it from British India on the east and conferring on it a distinctive culture and civilisation; with a captivating picturesqueness that renders it one of the finest beauty-spots in India; with a progress achieved by it in education, roads and sanitation that places it in the forefront of all states in India; with a population of five million men and women which an equable climate, an adequate rainfall, and a variety of cultivation and crops have supported without fear of a famine; with Hindu rulers who have claimed an instinctive loyalty from their people for an unbroken stretch of years; and yet with nearly two-fifths of its population counted as untouchables and suffering from disabilities unknown in any other part of India, Travancore was, until a little while ago, a curious puzzle. "When I saw with my own eyes," exclaimed Gandhiji on first visiting Travancore in 1925, "what the State was, what a cultured ruler and what a cultured Dewan it had, this existence of unapproachability staggered and puzzled me. How such an inhuman thing could exist in such a State, with such a sovereign, such a Dewan and such a people, baffled me, as it still baffles me." "That in a place so beautiful, so

lovely," he said in 1927, when he visited it a second time, "there should be unloveliness in man against man was and is a matter of the deepest grief to me. The world outside has a right to measure Hinduism by its manifestation in this State. Unfortunately for Hinduism, unfortunately for the State, and unfortunately even for all India, there is not much credit to the State in the matter of untouchability."

It was the Vaikam Satyagraha that for the first time revealed to India the depth of the evil. Untouchability was known in every part of India but unapproachability was something unknown. That if the so-called untouchables walked on the roads round or converging to the sacred temples, the temples would be polluted or, as the position was later revised, the devout temple-goers would be polluted by their shadow, was revealed by the Vaikam Satyagraha. And among these so-called untouchables (*theendal* castes in Malayalam) or Avarnas (*i. e.* those outside the pale of *varna*) were men and women belonging to the Ezhava caste, numbering from nine hundred thousand to a million and as cultured and educated as the proudest in the land; Pulayas, numbering about three hundred thousand, who are agricultural labourers, without whose labours the Savarnas could not exist for a single day; Pariahs, numbering about three hundred thousand, the product of whose labours could be made use of even in temples; Shanars or toddy-drawers in about the same number, whose labours too are essential for the jaggery which is used by all communities!

To realise the epic quality of the Temple Entry Proclamation that was issued by His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore on the evening of the 12th of November 1936, it is necessary to understand the magnitude of this evil that existed before the Proclamation wiped it out. That untouchability in its extreme form of unapproachability has existed for several centuries is apparent from Fa Hien's mention of the Chandalas who were obliged to live apart and were required when entering a town or bazaar to strike a piece of wood as a warning of their approach. Fa Hien never went to South India, but it is evident that the unapproachability he describes was an echo of that existing in South India. That this existed only a little while ago, if indeed it does not exist now, is apparent from an incident described in a recent book *After Everest* published a few months ago, by Howard Somervell, a Missionary working in the State for some ten years now: "Recently, my wife and I were walking along this little road. Some of the villagers, untouchables according to the dictates of the official religion, were going home from the fields after their day's work along the same road. Not seeing clearly who we were, for it was late in the evening, they vaguely perceived that some one else was coming towards them. At once they leapt over the wall, and ran off into the fields. They thought we might be some high-caste people, and to get near them or pass them on the road would have been a terrible thing, bringing curses on to their heads from the highly born

who would be defiled by their proximity. . . In some of the wilder parts of Travancore I have seen a high-caste man walking along the road with another man some fifty yards in front of him to drive the outcastes off the road before the great one comes along. Their presence within a certain number of yards would contaminate him." "But," adds the same writer, "that sort of thing, though once common enough, is getting rarer as time goes on, and in the same country of Travancore it is a usual thing for Brahmin boys to sit next to outcastes in many of the schools and colleges." The Temple Entry Enquiry Committee in their report published in 1934 remarked that "within the last fifty years, the idea of unapproachability has been gradually losing its hold on the Hindu community . . . Some of us can easily remember how in our school days Savarna boys had to purify themselves by a bath both noon and evening on their return from school. This practice has now almost completely ceased. Now there may be a few people here and there who religiously observe *theendal* (untouchability) every time they go out into the public road or any other place which is freely accessible to *theendal* classes and make a point of taking a purificatory bath before re-entering the house. But in the case of most people, the very idea of pollution does not enter into their minds in those circumstances. It may therefore be taken that generally among Savarnas the sentiment of unapproachability in ordinary social matters is almost extinct."

But while distance-pollution had been fast dying out, some of the fiercest battles have been fought round untouchability regarding places of worship. It was the Vaikam Satyagraha which was launched in the year 1924 and which went on until the end of the year 1925 that drew the attention of the whole of India to the problem of untouchability in Travancore. I propose to devote the next two chapters to a brief history of the struggle for the abolition of this untouchability. The difficulties of the problem were many and varied. Orthodox belief and customs had not only the recognition of the State but those customs were practised by even the royalty until a little while ago. Every sovereign of Travancore, ever since the great Maharajah Marthanda Varma dedicated the State to the Deity Padmanabha in the latter half of the eighteenth century, has been known to be a staunch Hindu respecting every one of the religious customs and observances. Lord Roberts recorded in his *Forty-one Years in India* that the Maharajah (Rama Varma Visakham Tirunal) who was " unusually enlightened ", sat at a state banquet, " retired from the table, between my wife and myself, while dinner was going on; he partook of no food or wine, but his close contact with us (he led my wife in to dinner and took her out on his arm) necessitated his undergoing a severe course of purification at the hands of the Brahmins as soon as the entertainment was over. " This is not to say, as Lord Roberts does, that the Maharajah was " steeped in superstition ", but that he respected the existing customs. An earlier

Maharajah is said to have observed "almost all the *vratams* (fasts) and vows connected with Sri Padmanabhaswami's temple and offered large sums of money as *kanikkai* (or offering to God). On one occasion the offering so made amounted to one lac of rupees." And it is customary for even the Maharajahs to go to temples bare-bodied and bare-footed.

The great esteem, bordering on reverence, in which these Maharajahs and Maharanis were held by their loyal people made the problem of untouchability more difficult, rather than easy, of solution, because they were believed by the orthodox to be supporting the evil in all its forms, and the reformers had not the courage to displease sovereigns so popularly esteemed. The gravity of the problem may be guaged from the following confident statement of Mr. Somervell, the author of *After Everest* published in 1936: "Mr. Gandhi, one of the noblest souls of India . . . . saw that the basis of untouchability was religious, and that the only place to attack it was the temple, symbol and centre of the religious life of the towns and villages. He demanded that the rights of man should be granted to the outcaste, and that he should be admitted into the temples. But here he found himself up against vested interests of the classes which keep the outcaste out. Though certain high-souled men of the Hindu community have responded, yet in many parts of India, and particularly in the part in which I live (Travancore) no single untouchable has been allowed one yard nearer the temples in spite

of Mr. Gandhi's campaign."

Mr. Somervell did not know what was to come within a few days of his having written these words. Nor did we know it. But what man could not have done it pleased God in His infinite mercy to do. But it is apparent that we should not have deserved His mercy if we had sat all these years helplessly. Men from all the Savarna and Avarna classes came forward and dedicated themselves to the task. Some like Sjt. T. K. Madhavan and Sjt. T.R. Krishnaswami Iyer died fighting for the cause. Sjt. Kelappan Nair risked his life. Retired judges like Sjt. C. K. Parameshwaran Pillai and Sjt. M. Govindan threw themselves heart and soul into the task. Sjt. Ramachandran refused to be drawn away by other interests and devoted all his time and energy to the eradication of the evil. There were also men like Aiyyan Kali and Raman Pillai living away in the interior of villages, and in hills and jungles, quite unknown to fame but better known to those to whom they carried enlightenment than the leaders I have named. They worked in faith and dauntlessly, and God has been gracious enough to reward their faith and their labours.

II
YEARS OF STRUGGLE

Though it was the Vaikam Satyagraha that proclaimed the unapproachability evil in Travancore to the whole of India, chronologically it was not the first step in the movement for the abolition of untouchability in Travancore. A worker who handed me a note giving an account of the agitation says that Sjt. C. Raman Pillai, retired High Court Judge, was the first in Travancore to ask for the opening of all State temples to the Avarnas, at a public meeting held in Quilon in 1917. Perhaps a more serious effort and the first in point of importance was made by the late Sjt. T. K. Madhavan, a prominent leader of the Ezhava community and then editor of a Malayalam weekly *Desabhimani*, by bringing before the Sree Mulam Popular Assembly a representation for the removal of untouchability and for the admission of all Avarnas to the Savarna temples. Government replied that the matter related to religion, and that, therefore, they could not interfere, thereby completely ignoring the fact that this favourite plea always advanced by the British Government could not be advanced by a Hindu Government which was bound to protect the interests of the humblest of its Hindu subjects. Sjt. T. K. Madhavan raised the question again before the Assembly in 1921, the Dewan repeating the Government reply made at the earlier session. In the meantime the great

Ezhava organisation, S. N. D. P. Yogam, with Shri Narayan Guru at its head, had been passing resolutions demanding temple entry at every one of its meetings. Protest meetings were held in various parts of the country against the attitude of the Government, and at an important protest meeting held in Trivandrum Sjt. C. K. Parameshwaran Pillai voiced the feelings on behalf of the Savarna Hindus. Then in 1923 the Cocanada Congress constituted the Kerala Untouchability Committee for the purpose of carrying on work for the removal of untouchability. Other organisations like the Kerala Hindu Sabha, the Nair Service Society of which Sjt. C. K. Parameshwaran Pillai was for a long time President and Sjt. Mannath K. Padmanabha Pillai, the leader of the Savarna jatha from Vaikam to Trivandrum, was General Secretary, the Yogakshema Sabha, the leading organisation of the Malayali Brahmins (Nambudiris), and the Kshatriya Mahasabha also lent their support to the agitation. The Nair Service Society and the Nair Samajams specially took up the agitation and conducted intensive propaganda throughout the State and created a remarkable awakening among the Savarnas. To the agreeable surprise of all the Nambudiri Yogakshema Sabha also passed resolutions in favour of opening temples to the Avarnas at their annual conferences.

All this led up to the Satyagraha at Vaikam. It was a fierce struggle. But the fierceness was all on the side of the orthodox forces which tried to resist the attempt to break the wall of prejudice and to open the road to the reform. The immediate

objective was indeed very limited — not temple entry, but only the opening of all the roads round the temple which were also open to other non-Hindus. It is impossible to describe here the various stages in the Vaikam Satyagraha or the suffering and sacrifice undergone by the brave men who fought that lonely battle. But in the interests of Satyagraha it is necessary to study in brief how the movement was carefully watched and nursed by Gandhiji at every stage, and how the surest foundations were laid of a heroic non-violent struggle which culminated at last in the epic Temple Entry Proclamation at the end of 12 years. Let us summarise in brief the principles which were laid down for the Satyagrahis from time to time and which were scrupulously observed by the Satyagrahis :

" 1. It was clearly understood that the object of the Satyagraha was limited, though no secret was made of the fact that the ultimate goal was for the throwing open, not only in Travancore, but throughout the whole of India, to the Harijans, of all public roads, all public schools, all public wells and all public temples which were open to the other Hindus.

2. That the movement was entirely Hindu, and that non-Hindus may not participate in it either by organising, leading or by financing it. Sjt. George Joseph was plainly advised by Gandhiji to express his sympathy 'by your pen, but not by organising the movement and certainly not by offering Satyagraha'. (Before Gandhiji's advice could reach him he had to take the imprisoned leader Keshava Menon's place and followed him to jail.)

3. That the Hindus alone must bleed for the movement and pay for it, and that no assistance in the form

of direct action from Hindus outside Travancore should be sought, since it would betray unreadiness on the part of the local Hindus for the reform.

4. That the Satyagrahis may not break the barricades or scale the fences that were put up by the authorities, or pierce through lines of policemen. It would be a species of violence.

5. That fasting was entirely out of the question, as fasting against authorities or a tyrant was a species of violence. (The only possible case, said Gandhiji, when a fast would be justified, would be when the local supporters go back upon their promise to suffer.)

6. That Satyagrahis should stand or squat in relays with quiet submission until arrested.

7. That steps should be taken to wait in deputation on the Maharani and the Dewan and to submit a monster petition signed by orthodox Hindus favouring the reform."

In these principles Gandhiji had the support of the spiritual head of the Ezhavas Shri Narayan Guru Swami.

Let it be noted too that the State authorities also behaved with remarkable restraint. Though leaders of the movement like Sjt. T. K. Madhavan and Sjt. Keshava Menon were imprisoned, they were treated in jail with consideration and courtesy, and the Maharani took the earliest opportunity to release all the Satyagrahi prisoners even whilst the Satyagraha was going on. This was as much due to the Maharani's generosity as to the scrupulously non-violent way in which the Satyagraha was being conducted.

But the struggle had to be continued. The Satyagrahis not only went through much silent suffering, but also through social boycott at the

hands of the orthodox and considerable unkindness on the part of their family members, and some of them were even threatened with the deprivation of their share in the family property. Undismayed they carried on, whilst discouraging things continued to happen at every moment, and the struggle seemed to be unending. A peaceful jatha of 500 Savarna Hindus from Vaikam and another big jatha under the leadership of Dr. M. E. Naidu from Nagercoil marched to Trivandrum to rouse public opinion and to assure the State authorities that the bulk of the intelligent Savarna Hindus were for the reform. Imprisonments had now been stopped but the roads were barricaded, and the Satyagrahis had to pass through a tougher test than jail-going, for the barricades meant indefinite peaceful picketting in sun and rain. I cannot here refrain from giving the following pen-picture given by Deenabandhu C. F. Andrews of the quiet determination and suffering of the Satyagrahis witnessed by him when he visited Vaikam:

"I have been to Vaikam and it is impossible adequately to describe how deeply I have been impressed with the character of the work of Satyagraha which is now going on. Order reigns in every part, everything is perfectly peaceful and quiet both on the side of the Satyagrahis and on the side of the police. Yet all the while a desperate struggle is proceeding and it can only end in victory for Satyagraha.

I saw each of the barricades in turn. One volunteer was sitting by the road-side, spinning away at a charkha. Two others were standing quietly at the entrance to the roads, while the police of Travancore stood opposite

them blocking their entrance. Thus they stood opposite to one another in relays for six hours at a time. One batch goes at six in the morning and leaves at 12 noon. The other batch goes at noon and leaves at 6 p. m. As they go along the streets back to their homes they sing songs about the glory of the charkha and the removal of untouchability. The people run out to watch them; and it is as clear to me as possible that the majority of the people of the place are on their side.

How great those sufferings had been, I could easily understand when I was there on the spot. The volunteers had actually stood for hours in the water during the rains, and at one time it had reached as high as their shoulders but still they had persisted. The police had been given boats, which were fastened to the neighbouring houses. But the volunteers had stayed in the water and suffered. This was told to me by the police themselves. They were amazed at the fortitute of the Satyagrahis.

* * * *

There is no sign of despondency or defeat in the Satyagraha Ashram at Vaikam. On the contrary, there is every sign of confident victory. Whenever the volunteers are not on duty at the barricades they are spinning their yarn and weaving their cloth and carding their cotton. Not a moment of valuable time is wasted. I was given, for my own use, a dhoti which was spun and woven from first to last by the volunteers at Vaikam."

To add to their troubles there was an outbreak of smallpox in the Satyagraha camp. And all this suffering apparently seemed to be in vain. The State Legislative Council threw out by a majority of 22 to 21 votes the resolution asking for the opening of the temple roads to the Avarna Hindus. The Government majority of 22 was made up of 15 officials, 3 nominated members,

one Brahmin representative of vested interests, and three elected members. This showed that the authorities far from taking a neutral attitude actively helped in defeating the resolution. There was despair among the ranks of Satyagrahis, impatience of the "slow" method of Satyagraha, and even an inclination on the part of a few to cross the border-line. Practically from week to week Gandhiji followed the progress of the struggle, guiding them, directing them, and often cheering up their drooping spirits. "What is a year's suffering on the part of the few reformers in their attempt to break down the iron wall of prejudice?" he said in the course of an article in *Young India*. "To lose patience is to lose the battle. They must fight to the finish. . . . Breaking of heads will serve no purpose. To attempt to force the entry will invite stronger barricades. . . . All the reforms that have been brought about by violent methods have taken not one year but years. The victory of enlightenment over darkness in Europe was a long and torturing process. And one is not sure that it was a lasting success. There was no conversion of those who opposed and died. The others who were converted were attracted by the sufferings of those who died even whilst inflicting death on their opponents. The net legacy that age bequeathed to the world was a confirmation of belief in methods of violence. I hope, therefore, that the Satyagrahis will not swerve from their path even though their ranks may be thinned and victory may seem further off than ever. Satyagraha is self-effacement, greatest humiliation, greatest

patience and brightest faith. It is its own reward."

This was followed by a visit to Vaikam, where he stayed with the Satyagrahis, and advised them in detail on the conduct and implications of Satyagraha. He interviewed the orthodox Nambudiris, and later paid a visit to Trivandrum where he waited on Her Highness and interviewed the Dewan and the Police Commissioner. I give in the second part of this book containing Gandhiji's speeches a verbatim report of one of his talks to the Satyagrahis, as it is a permanent part of the literature of Satyagraha.

The temper of the orthodoxy may be guaged from my notes of Gandhiji's talk with the Nambudiris which took place almost within the precincts of the temple. It is useful to record this, as it was the same Nambudiri spokesman who carried on this conversation that saw Gandhiji again after 12 years, when he visited Vaikam during the Travancore Pilgrimage, and blessed the Temple Entry Proclamation.

Gandhiji: Is it fair to exclude a whole section of Hindus, because of their supposed lower birth, from public roads which can be used by non-Hindus, by criminals and bad characters, and even by dogs and cattle?

Nambudiri Trustee: How can it be helped? They are reaping the reward of their *karma*.

G. No doubt they are suffering for their *karma* by being born as untouchables. But why must you add to the punishment? Are they worse than even criminals and beasts?

N. They must be so, for otherwise God would

not condemn them to be born untouchables.

G. But God may punish them. Who are we human beings to take the place of God and add to the punishment?

N. We are but instruments. God uses us as His instruments in order to impose on them the punishment that their *karma* has earned for them.

G. But supposing the Avarnas said that they were instruments in the hands of God in order to impose afflictions on you? What would you do?

N. Then Government would stand between them and us and prevent them from so doing. Good men would do so. Mahatmaji, we beseech you to prevent the Avarnas from depriving us of our age-old privileges.

G. Will you prove to me that you are entitled to prevent them from using the roads? I am sure that the suppressed classes have as much right to use the roads as you have. The shastras nowhere lay down that they may not use these roads. Do you know that even the Dewan thinks that you have taken up a wrong attitude?

N. How does the Dewan's opinion help us? He is welcome to hold what opinion he likes. And why, Mahatmaji, do you use the word 'suppressed' for these classes? Do you know why they are 'suppressed'?

G. Oh, yes! Just for the same reason that Dyer massacred the innocents in Jallianwalla.

N. So you think those who introduced the custom were Dyers? You would call Shankaracharya a Dyer?

G. I am calling no Acharya a Dyer. But I do

characterise your action as Dyerism, and if indeed any Acharya was responsible for introducing this custom his ignorance was as monstrous as that of General Dyer.

N. But how can we give up an ancient custom? You say the Satyagrahis are going through suffering. Suffering is entirely on our side. The Satyagrahis sit at the gates of the temples. Their shadow would pollute us and so we have to take a long and circuitous way to the temple! Is that not a great hardship?

G. That surely is extraordinary. It reminds one of the old story of the wolf and the lamb. I beseech you to talk with some reason at least.

N. Reason is out of place in matters religious.

G. If this is an ancient Sanatani custom it must obtain everywhere in India. But I do not find it in any other part of the country.

N. Surely untouchability is there in every part of India. We carry untouchability a little further. That is all.

G. You say these people are worse than criminals. Supposing they became Mussalmans or Christians tomorrow. Would they then cease to be criminals?

(The Nambudiri remained silent. But the Dewaswom Commissioner answered on his behalf: No *fresh* Christian or Mussalman convert would have the right. It is old Christians and Mussalmans who enjoy the right!)

C. Rajagopalachari (who was present at the interview): So Christians and Mussalmans may upset God's rules and regulations?

No reply.

G. You cite Shankaracharya's authority in support of your contention. Will you show it to me?

N. Yes.

G. And if Shankaracharya's books do not support the custom you will withdraw your opposition?

N. There is enough evidence there. But of course you may explain it away.

G. No, I will not explain it away. We will have it interpreted by recognised Pandits.

N. If the interpretation goes against the custom we cannot accept it.

G. So then there is no authority in Shankaracharya's books, but in your own lack of reason? Well, supposing the court were to decide that the roads should be opened to the Avarnas?

N. We should use the roads no longer, and we should leave the temples.

G. And if the Maharajah were to issue a Smriti throwing open the roads like the Shankaracharya Smriti that you claim there is in support of the prohibition, what will you do?

N. The State has authority to issue what Smriti it likes. We should have to obey it.

G. I beseech you not to forget that you are the trustee of Hinduism, and I hope you will not besmirch its fair name. Well let me suggest a compromise. Would you accept a referendum?

N. A referendum of only the temple-going public?

G. That's not fair. I mean a referendum of all Savarnas, I don't say of all Avarnas. That should satisfy you.

No reply.

G. Another suggestion. Supposing we ask a recognised Pandit in India to interpret the Shankara Smriti ? Would you accept his interpretation ?

N. There may be no authority in the Smriti, but there would be sufficient authority found in the commentary on the Smriti.

(An old man at this stage exclaimed: It was Parashurama who gave us the whole of Malabar. Now if you were to ask us to produce Parashurama's charter, how can we do so ? Similar is the present right. How can we produce authority for it ?)

G. A last alternative. Would you accept arbitration ? You appoint a Pandit, I appoint a Pandit on behalf of the Satyagrahis, and the Dewan acts as Umpire. What do you say to that ?

No reply.

It is needless to carry on this episode any further. Blind unreason could go no further. But a Satyagrahi cannot afford to be impatient even with blind unreason. The struggle went on for a number of months more before the authorities relented and opened the roads on three sides of the temple. The opening of the roads led to similar attempts in respect of other temple roads. There were beatings and humiliations to which the Satyagrahis were subjected, but they won on every front.

And yet the reform did not come as soon as one might have expected. Even the Vaikam settlement was 'flimsy in one respect' as Gandhiji described it, for the Government had taken shelter under the terms 'open to non-Hindus', reserving to them-

selves the liberty of excluding the roads to non-Hindus as much as to the Avarna Hindus, so that these last may have no excuse to say that the roads which were open even to non-Hindus were not open to them. But it was a settlement which was still the bedrock of freedom as Gandhiji called it. "I call it a bedrock of freedom," said he, in a speech at Alleppey in 1927, "because the settlement is a document between the people and the State constituting a big step in the direction of liberty in one respect at least."

But the reform came in driblets. The roads at Thiruvarappu and Suchindram were still under dispute. Gandhiji had again to wait on the Maharani, the Dewan, the Police Commissioner and carry on anxious negotiations with them; he had to appeal to the authorities to withdraw the externment order against Sjt. Madhavan as also the general order prohibiting meetings within a certain radius of Thiruvarappu. His speeches in 1927, some of which are reproduced in this book, indicate the stage at which the movement had arrived then. His last word with the Savarnas was agitation, more agitation, until the authorities were convinced that all the Savarnas wanted the monster of untouchability to go. And they did not let the grass grow under their feet. An attempt was also made at Suchindram to get the roads round the Suchindram temple opened. A Satyagraha was started there by a Committee of which Dr. M. E. Naidu was the secretary. This agitation continued for about a month, when it was stopped in response to a communication from Sjt. C. K.

Parameshwaran Pillai who wrote that the Police had agreement to open the roads in question. The Satyagraha was stopped, but the roads remained closed as before. There were numerous meetings held all the year round demanding the opening of roads and now also of the temples. The moving spirit of the agitation, Sjt. T. K. Madhavan, died without even seeing all the roads opened to the Avarnas, much less the temples. But he had not laboured in vain. His was the reward of having worked without an eye to the fruit thereof. It was only in January 1934 that the Government saw the strength and point of the agitation and issued the following communique on the eve of Gandhiji's visit to Trivandrum : "Government share the view of the Committee that distance-pollution or *theendal* must cease and are of opinion that no general public funds should be spent by Government in the maintenance of public tanks, public wells, *chatrams,* etc., admission to which is denied to any person by reason of his belonging to *theendal* caste. They have resolved, therefore, that all public roads, public tanks, public wells, *chatrams,* etc., maintained by them out of their general public funds, shall be thrown open to all classes of people, irrespective of the caste to which they belong. Measures to carry out these objects soon are being considered." These measures were actually taken in May 1936.

III

THE MIRACLE HAPPENS

The communique was good but too late in coming. The objective of the reformers had now changed. They had made up their minds to be satisfied with nothing less than the removal of untouchability root and branch. Gandhiji had permitted Sjts. T. K. Madhavan and Konoor Nambudripad to start a temple entry agitation and, if possible, to start individual Satyagraha as early as 1927. The slow but sure way in which the earlier efforts had led to the opening of all public roads and wells, etc., had little by little loosened numerous bricks in the stronghold of prejudice. When the communique was issued there was no opposition from the orthodoxy, and no troubles or disturbances arose over the use of roads which it was said would be defiled or would defile the adjoining temples by the Avarnas' use of them. Sjt. T. K. Madhavan wore himself away in preparing public opinion. There was the great Ezhava spiritual leader under whose guidance and inspiration the movement had steadily gathered strength, and when he died the movement, far from slackening, gained in vigour and determination. The extreme section of the Ezhavas and Cherumas and Pulayas was getting restive and even threatened to go out of the Hindu fold if the Savarnas continued to disown them. Some of them went so far as to raise the cry of 'No religion' and 'No God'. During his tours

in the State Gandhiji met all of these groups and patiently argued and reasoned with them.

On the other hand the question of temple entry was far more difficult of solution than the question of the roads. There was not even the semblance of shastraic authority for the prohibition of the use of roads, and though Gandhiji had repeatedly asked for authority to be shown to him no authority could be produced. But for temple entry, if there was no text prohibiting the Avarnas in the seminal scriptures, a good deal of literature defining customs had sprung up during the mediaeval period, following in all likelihood foreign and iconoclastic inroads. Some of the smritis did exclude the so-called Chandalas to whose description of course hardly any community at the present day could answer. There were, on the other hand, other smritis which did provide for exceptions and exceptional occasions when the touch of the untouchables did not constitute pollution or necessitate a bath.

But the question of temples in the South, especially in Travancore, was surrounded by more difficulty inasmuch as the temples there are not the simple unimposing affairs that they are in the North. They were consecrated according to Agamas, every part of the temple has its purpose and use, every little detail in the worship is gone through carefully and, rightly or wrongly, any disturbance in the routine is contemplated with a superstitious fear. Often enough in days gone by the temples had to go through elaborate and expensive purificatory ceremonies because some rule or instruction in the Agamas was infringed. This is how the

Temple Entry Committee described the Sanatanist position:

"The sacredness of temples should not be allowed to be marred by breaking the rules of the Agamas. The entry of the Avarnas into temples is prohibited by the Agama Sastras, and such entry, it is declared, will, if expiatory ceremonies as prescribed are not performed, destroy the sanctity. If the sanctity (Chaitanya) of the image is lost, the temple becomes a mere empty building and must certainly cease to serve the purpose of a temple. Temples are intended for the benefit of those who have faith in the Divinity of the Pratishta (installation) in the temple and the sanctity of the temple as the abode of the Divinity. Temples themselves have been consecrated according to the Agama Sastras; the deity is installed in accordance with the rites prescribed by Agama Sastras; and the sanctity attaching to the temple and the deity installed therein is, according to the faith of the worshipping Hindu, induced by the performances of rites and ceremonies prescribed by the Agama Sastras. In order to maintain that sanctity, the rules prescribed or the conditions laid down in the Agama Sastras must be observed. If we have faith in temples, in the deities installed in the temples, and in the forms of worship observed in the temples, we cannot withdraw our faith from certain conditions alone. All are equally matters of faith, and it will be improper and illogical to attempt to apply the test of reason to any one part of them alone. Just as we cannot reason as to how or why the ceremonies of installation induce sanctity in the image or why the daily ceremonies prescribed by the Agamas are needed to maintain the sanctity of the image, we should not attempt to reason how or why restrictions as regards temple entry are necessary in order not to destroy that sanctity."

Then there is the insistence on scrupulous

personal cleanliness and purity of those engaged in the worship as well as personal cleanliness of those going to worship. This is how the Travancore Manual published in 1906 describes the prevailing belief, and the functions and qualifications of those engaged in worship at the Ananta Padmanabhapuram temple at Trivandrum:

" Such scrupulous observance of personal purity is a characteristic feature of all the West Coast temples. The accidental entry of a person of any caste lower than the Sudra into the four walls of these temples requires a purificatory ceremony known as the *Punyaham*, and that into the Sri Padmanabha's temple would require a most expensive one. Every temple of importance has got its *Mel-Santis* (head priests) and *Kil-Santis* (assistants) for the daily performance of its *pujas;* but on festive occasions the help of a *Tantri* or a *Nambudiripad* or any such dignitary specially deputed from of old for the several ceremonies such as the *Sribhutaveli*, *Kodiyettu* or *Kalasam* is indispensable.

The Sri Padmanabha's temple at Trivandrum has as its functionaries two Sanyasins, representatives of the *Vilvamangala Matam*, two *Nambudiripads*, four *Nambis* or arch-priests (two for Sri Padmanabha's *puja* and two for Narasimha's and Krishna's) and thirtyfive *Kilsantikars* or assistants to the head priests. The two Nambis of Sri Padmanabha's temple called the *Valya-Nambi* and the *Panchagavya-Nambi* make a permanent stay for six years in the houses assigned to them at Mitranandapuram close to the temple during the time they are appointed to act as priests. The other two Nambis are appointed only for three years. These Nambis ought to be chosen only from certain established families of North Malabar. The two Sanyasins are monks of the Nambudiri caste and, being specially connected with the origin of the temple,

are looked upon both by the Maharajah and the people with high respect and unstinted veneration. Special *matams* to live in have been assigned to them at Mitranandapurm. These Sanyasins and Nambis and the minor priests get their daily allowance of rice and *pativus* from the temple. The Nambis must lead a celibate life in seclusion during their term of priesthood. They are also expected to be highly religious and pure. On their way after bath to the temple which is connected with Mitranandapuram by a foot-path three to four feet in breadth, paved with granite stone specially intended for these priests to walk on, they carry a cadjan umbrella, the emblem of their office, and are led by a guard to the temple for fear of being polluted by passers-by. The Sanyasin (one of the two) who goes to the temple every morning is led by two Brahmins with a small bronze ewer and a wooden seat in their hands for him to perform his *puja*, and these two Brahmins call out to the passers-by so as to let the Sanyasin go to the temple unpolluted. The *Tantri* Nambudiripad, the highest dignitory of the temple, makes his appearance only on festive occasions.

Besides the priests and their assistants referred to above, every temple has got its staff of servants and servant-maids, such as the light-carriers, the musicians, the *Marans* whose business is to sing and sound the conchshell, the flute, the *Takil* or drum and the *Puni* (another drum that gives a shrill note), the sweepers, the vessel cleaners, the cooks, the water-drawers, the accounts, the Chandra-karans, the guards, the hereditary singers, the flower-garland makers, etc. As a result you find that a Hindu temple on this cast is a centre of attraction to the old and the young, by reason of its perfect system of worship, by the sweet fragrance and peace it breathes, the health and recreation it affords, its remarkable neatness, its marvellous punctuality and regularity in all its varied functions, the active

beneficence which it dispenses and, above all, by the devotion, the reverence and the order which it silently inculcates on the thousands of votaries that visit it."

Here is a description of the various parts of a temple:

"1. The *Srikovil* or temple proper. It is generally square in plan and surmounted by a conical roof covered with copper plates with a *Tazhikakudam* or *Stupam* of gold or copper gilt at the top. Inside this the image is placed. We also meet with instances of circular Srikovils in some of the older temples as at Vaikam, Ettumanur, etc.

2. The *Mantapam* in front of the Srikovil.

3. Corridors or pillared halls used for several purposes.

4. *Gopuras* or towers containing carvings of several deities and mythological persons. These marvellous designs of various patterns also adorn the pillars, etc., of the *Mantapas*. The powers of design of the Dravidian architect are fully displayed in the ornamentation of the temples.

5. *Sivelipuras* or broad corridors between the gateway and the inner shrine, the two rows of pillars and the stone ceiling above having been made the receptacle of the talents of the sculptor's chisel.

6. *Dhwajastambha* or Flagstaff. In some temples where there are no flagstaffs temporary ones are used on Ootsavam occasions. There are besides wells and tanks used for sacred purposes and a series of low buildings used for diverse other purposes."

All this was too true. But what could not be proved was that the so-called Avarnas of today were the Chandalas referred to in the Smritis and Agamas. The reformers promised that they had no thought of taking away from the sanctity of worship or of the temples, and assured everyone that the most rigid rules of cleanliness that would

be framed would be respected by the Avarnas as much as by the Savarnas.

The origin of these temples is wrapped in obscurity, but that of the most important State temple, viz. the Ananta Padmanabhapuram temple in Trivandrum, the central place of which is certainly a thousand years old, as appears from the inscriptions, is given below :

"The spot where the Trivandrum temple now stands was formerly a jungle called Anantankadu. In this jungle lived a Pulaya and his wife who obtained their livelihood by cultivating a large rice-field near their hut. One day as the Pulaya's wife was weeding her fields, she heard the cry of a baby close by and on search found it to be a beautiful child which she took to be a divine infant and was at first afraid to touch. However, after washing herself, she fed the baby with her breast milk and left it again under the shade of a large tree. As soon as she had retired, a five-headed cobra came, removed the infant to a hole in the tree, and sheltered it from the sun with its hood, as the child was an incarnation of the God Vishnu. While there the Pulaya and his wife used to make offerings to the baby of milk and conjee in a cocoanut shell. Tidings of these things reached the ears of the sovereign of Travancore who immediately ordered a temple to be erected at the place."

It is interesting to note that a Pulaya woman figures largely in the supposed origin of the temple, and yet a Pulaya is the lowest of the low whose shadow was, until the other day, supposed to pollute not only man but the Deity !

But I must turn now to the movement itself. The movement was slowly and surely gathering strength when in 1932 came Gandhiji's Epic Fast

against the Premier's Award, his concentration on the Harijan question, and then his 21 days' fast in 1933. Sjt. Kelappan Nair, who had been closely associated with the Vaikam Satyagraha and with the anti-untouchability work in Malabar, had declared a fast towards the end of 1932 for the opening of the Guruvayur temple in Malabar. It was regarded by Gandhiji to be premature as public opinion had not been sufficiently cultivated, and from his fasting bed in Yeravda Prison he had to send a peremptory telegram to Sjt. Kelappan to suspend the fast and to withdraw the men who were inside the Guruvayur temple. He did so in the interests of the movement itself and in the interests of non-violence which was to be the only means to eradicate the evil. He, therefore, had no hesitation in sending his peremptory advice, "although," as he recognised, "many reformers were actually in the temple threatening to declare a sympathetic fast with Kelappan Nair, and although the reformers thought that the prize was within their grasp." The Temple Entry Bill and the Anti-Untouchability Bill had no other end in view but this that the powerlessness that many trustees of temples felt about opening the temples should be removed, and that there should be no such thing as State recognition of untouchability. The 21 days' fast of 1933 was nothing more than a clarion call to the whole of Hinduism for self-purification.

All these events led to intensive agitation on behalf of reformers everywhere. The Guruvayur referendum organised by Shri Rajagopalachari,

and members of the Harijan Sevak Sangh was a great measure of educative value and paved the way for similar measures in Travancore. This was followed by Gandhiji's Harijan Tour, during which he covered the length and breadth of India rousing Hindu public opinion, meeting orthodoxy face to face, accepting their sneers and taunts and rowdy demonstrations and even violence with a smile and a cheer, burning to holy flame when there was the slightest fear of violence on the part of reformers, reasoning with those who threatened to break away from Hinduism or to renounce religion itself and so cut at the root instead of lopping off the poisonous branch. As we have seen it was on the eve of his Harijan Tour in Travancore that the State issued that communique opening all the public roads, wells, *chatrams* to all classes of people. But Gandhiji wanted nothing more or less than the withdrawal of State recognition to untouchability in any shape or form. And he made fervent appeals to the State in this behalf in every one of his speeches in Travancore.

In the meantime the State had appointed a Temple Entry Committee, composed of nine members, three of whom were known reformers and two of whom belonged to the so-called Avarna castes. The Committee brought to bear on their task a good deal of industry and research, examined numerous witnesses, and issued in January 1934 a ponderous report, which is a mine of information. The two members who signed the minority report, Sjts. C. K. Parameshwaran Pillai and M. Govindan, recommended immediate opening of the temples,

but the majority recommendations were fearfully cautious and failed to reflect the overwhelming mass of evidence in favour of the reform. The very fact, however, of the appointment of the Committee and their labours was a distinct step in the progress towards reform. They examined witnesses at no less than 24 important places and had answers to their exhaustive questionnaire from 3,122 persons. The bulk of these was in favour of temple entry. Of the 325 Savarnas they examined 238 were in favour of temple entry, all the evidence of 22 ladies recorded by the Committee was in favour of temple entry, and the Committee came to the conclusion that "there was a strong feeling among Savarnas in favour of temple entry being allowed." All this was an education for the people.

Then came Dr. Ambedkar's declaration at a conference of the Harijans in the Nasik District asking them to break away from the Hindu fold, followed by a scramble on behalf of the various non-Hindu Missionary organisations to claim the possible renegades to their own folds. The declaration did give the electric shock that it was meant to give to all those working for Harijan uplift, and intensified the demands of the Avarnas for temple entry. At a meeting of the Harijan Sevak Sangh held early in January 1936, Sjt. G. Ramachandran, the indefatigable Secretary of the Kerala Provincial Board, raised the question of an organised and concentrated agitation for temple entry in Travancore, and he was supported in this by the veteran leaders of the Harijan movement,

Sjt. C. K. Parameshwaran Pillai, the President of the Board and Retired High Court Judge of Travancore, and Sjt. M. Govindan, Retired District Judge and Ezhava leader. The Harijan Sevak Sangh Central Board accepted the resolution, resolved that effective steps should be taken for securing temple entry for Harijans, sanctioned Rs. 500 for the campaign, and authorised Sjt. G. Ramachandran to take the necessary steps in consultation with Gandhiji. For this purpose Gandhiji suggested "an accurate referendum or some such means" to "show beyond all doubt that a great majority of Savarna Hindus are decidedly in favour of the opening of Travancore temples to Harijans precisely on the same terms as themselves."

The Kerala Provincial Board of the Harijan Sevak Sangh then held an All Kerala Temple Entry Conference on the 9th and 10th of May 1936 at Trivandrum under the presidentship of Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru. This was one of the biggest temple entry conferences held in the province, and the main resolution was moved by Sjt. Kelappan. The Conference appealed to the Travancore Government to fully and unreservedly open all State-controlled temples to Harijans immediately, and also appointed a deputation to wait upon H. H. the Maharajah of Travancore and to present a Memorial signed by as many thousands of Savarnas as possible, praying for Harijan temple entry. The Conference was followed by a hurricane campaign by the Harijan Sevak Sangh workers, who had been already engaged in this work for over two years, and they began systematic organisation of public

opinion by taking the signatures of all possible Savarna temple-going adults to a Memorial to His Highness, of organising *bhajan* parties, of taking quiet ordered parties through all parts of the State in order to arouse public opinion. A deputation appointed by the Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh and consisting of Sjts. M. Govindan, K. G. Kunjukrishna Pillai, K. P. Nilacanta Pillai, V. Atchutha Menon, Damodara Menon and G. Ramachandran toured throughout Travancore. The people took up the call with spontaneous enthusiasm. There were crowded meetings everywhere and the parties of Satyagrahis evoked a warm welcome wherever they went. I shall let the Provincial Secretary's report speak for itself:

"Public meetings are being held everywhere throughout the Province. The Malabar District in the North is doing very well. The Cochin State is moving rather slow. In Travancore there is unprecedented enthusiasm. Sjt. V. Atchutha Menon, B. A. B. L., High Court Vakil, who toured Central Travancore, reports that even those orthodox people who at the time of the Guruvayur Temple Entry Satyagraha still objected to Harijan temple entry are now willingly giving their signatures in our temple entry forms. 20,000 of these forms capable of including 600,000 signatures have been distributed throughout the province. Sjt. Atchutha Menon further reports that in Central Travancore, where the movement among the Ezhavas for migration to Christianity was the strongest, he saw clear evidence that the Ezhava masses have been considerably impressed by the sincerity of our movement and therefore the conversion movement is beginning to collapse. We have further reliable evidence of this from other sources also. The conversion of the Valiya Rajah

of Ennakkad to temple entry for Harijans, and the propaganda that the Rajah and Sjts. Pandavath Sankar Pillai and K. Kumar are carrying on in Central Travancore have produced excellent results. The Pandalam Committee under Sjt. K. Keshava Kurup is leading in the collection of signatures from Savarnas to our Memorial to H. H. the Maharajah praying for temple entry. The systematic collection of signatures has not yet been taken up by all the committees. One or two of these have lagged behind. But arrangements are being made for effective work in these places also; so far the work of collection of signatures can be said to be only fairly well organised. But we are now concentrating our attention on this item, and this week this part of the work will be better organised everywhere. Reports about South Travancore from Dr. M. E. Naidu indicate that just as in Central Travancore vigorous opponents at the time of the Guruvayur Temple Entry Satyagraha have now changed their attitude and are willing to help."

The collection of the several thousand signatures to the Memorial, after a thorough explanation of the objects of the movement at conferences and meetings, was an effective education in itself. The Ezhava masses were reassured. Meanwhile some of the Ezhava leaders exercised a restraining influence on the wild talk of a few of the youthful people amongst them and appealed to them to exercise a little patience. The following appeal appearing in the columns of the *Hindu* was couched in a language that was irresistible :

"We have our heroes. . . His Holiness Shri Narayan Guru, than whom there could be no greater hero for an Ezhava, was admittedly a Hindu. His teaching of 'One God, one religion, one caste' is but the loftiest tenet of philosophical Hinduism. The great

poet Kumaran Asan lived and died a Hindu. The leader of the anti-untouchability campaign, T. K. Madhavan, who gave the lead to others in the same field throughout India, spent his life for the cause of reforming Hindu society; he was a Hindu. If we abandon now the religion of these heroes of ours, their souls will be turning in their graves and pointing their accusing fingers at us, they will be calling us traitors. The Ezhavas in Travancore today can very well be envied and emulated by any other great society for their solidarity and united front. On the question of change of religion differences and dissensions are bound to arise. The day this question is pushed to its extremes, will be struck the knell of a great and solid community."

Above all the writer appealed to the community to

> "Rather bear those ills we have
> Than fly to others that we know not of."

During April 1936 Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru, who had gone to Travancore to preside over the All Kerala Temple Entry Conference, undertook an extensive tour through the State. Everywhere she made a point of asking her audience whether anyone among them was opposed to temple entry by the Harijans, and nowhere did she find a single dissentient vote. At several places she was greeted by *bhajan* parties composed of Harijans and Savarnas singing devotional songs. Crowds lined miles of the road along which her car passed, in order to have a glimpse of her and to greet her and to wish godspeed in her mission. Her meetings were attended by thousands of women—Nair, Nambudiri, Ezhava and Harijans. Ezhava ladies presented addresses to her. "I know," she said to them,

and unreserved temple entry for Harijans, signed by 50,522 Savarnas of Travancore.

And when the reform came, it came in the shape of the following Proclamation issued by the Travancore Government on the 12th of November:

"PROFOUNDLY CONVINCED OF THE TRUTH AND VALIDITY OF OUR RELIGION, BELIEVING THAT IT IS BASED ON DIVINE GUIDANCE AND ON ALL-COMPREHENDING TOLERATION, KNOWING THAT IN ITS PRACTICE IT HAS THROUGHOUT THE CENTURIES ADAPTED ITSELF TO THE NEED OF THE CHANGING TIMES, SOLICITOUS THAT NONE OF OUR HINDU SUBJECTS SHOULD, BY REASON OF BIRTH, CASTE OR COMMUNITY, BE DENIED THE CONSOLATION AND SOLACE OF THE HINDU FAITH, WE HAVE DECIDED AND HEREBY DECLARE, ORDAIN AND COMMAND THAT, SUBJECT TO SUCH RULES AND CONDITIONS AS MAY BE LAID DOWN AND IMPOSED BY US FOR PRESERVING THEIR PROPER ATMOSPHERE AND MAINTAINING THEIR RITUALS AND OBSERVANCES, THERE SHOULD HENCEFORTH BE NO RESTRICTION PLACED ON ANY HINDU BY BIRTH OR RELIGION ON ENTERING OR WORSHIPPING AT TEMPLES CONTROLLED BY US AND OUR GOVERNMENT."

The Proclamation did away, with one stroke of the Maharajah's pen, with all State recognition to untouchability. It is thus a charter of religious liberty for all the so-called Avarnas of Travancore who had for centuries groaned under the weight of an injustice that had no sanction in Hinduism.

It is the unique character of this Charter that has for weeks and months made it the principal topic of talks in every Hindu home and made the Maharajah's name universally acclaimed as ranking with King Ashoka and King Akbar.

IV

THE GLORY OF THE MIRACLE

I have not likened His Highness the Maharajah lightly to Ashoka and Akbar. The religious tradition has been there in the long royal line. Many of the Maharajahs, as I have said before, were known for their piety and for their scrupulous observance of all religious customs and practices. Some of them were also known for their innate humility and lived up to their title of Padmanabha-das. Rama Raja, or Dharma Raja as he was popularly called by his devoted people, died in 1798 with words on his lips which are still remembered. The day on which he lay on his death-bed was not considered as auspicious for a Hindu's death, and the Maharajah in full possession of his mental powers said: "Yes, I know that today is *Chaturdasi,* but it is unavoidable considering the sins of war I have committed with Rama Iyen, when we both conquered and annexed several petty States to Travancore. Going to hell is unavoidable under the circumstances. I can never forget the horrors to which we have been parties during those wars. How then do you expect me to die on a better day than *Chaturdasi?* May God forgive me all my sins." Another Maharajah personally superintended every detail of the sculpturing and carving of the exquisite Kulasekhara Mandapam in the Temple at Trivandrum, and the story is told that when an artisan who was working

at a most delicate figure called out to his servant for his chew the Maharajah, in order not to allow the artisan's work to be interrupted, handed over the chew himself. So very much were the Maharajahs wrapped up with the religious life of the people. The present Maharajah has inherited this tradition, and by the great act of his reign has not only ennobled the tradition but has lived up to the implications of the title of Padmanabhadas by emancipating the humblest of his people. He will live longer in the memory of men than any other Maharajah for having issued a Smriti which is the people's charter of spiritual emancipation.

And if the Proclamation places the Maharajah's name side by side with the great kings of old, it places the Maharani's name alongside those names of revered memory — Maharani Ahalyabai and Lakshmibai. "The modern miracle of Travancore," said Gandhiji to an American lady who interviewed him, " is due to the influence of one woman, Her Highness the Maharani of Travancore. When I was in Travancore some years ago, I met the present Maharani. She was determined to do what was the purest act of justice, and it is she who is at the back of the Maharajah's decision. It was a most courageous act to issue that Proclamation and still more courageous to carry it out to the letter. The Maharajah could not have done it without the support of his mother. So I see the hand of woman in this modern miracle."

But the glory of the miracle is shared in no small measure by their able Dewan, Sachivottama Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, whom the people are



Her Highness Maharani Setu Parvati Bayi

(In Temple Costume)

likely to remember with the same feelings of pride and gratitude that they do the great Dewans of old, Dewan Keshava Pillai and Raja Sir T. Madhava Rao. Both of these are called the makers of modern Travancore. But it was reserved to Dewan Sir C. P. Ramaswami Iyer suddenly to make, what was until a little while ago one of the "black patches" of India, "a bright spot radiating its light throughout India". When one remembers the Shanar riots of 1858 to quell which Dewan Madhava Rao had to move the troops and strengthen the police; and when one remembers that after all the question was a most elementary right, viz. the Shanar women's right to cover the upper parts of their bodies; and when one also remembers that after long negotiations the great Dewan had to consent to the issue of a Proclamation which though it conceded to the Shanar women their elementary right had to be coupled with the restriction "that they do not imitate the same mode of dress that appertains to the higher castes;" when one remembers all this past history, one can have an idea of the cool courage and tact and statesmanship that the issue of this unique Proclamation must have required on the part of Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar. May he live long to see the complete abolition of the distinction between "higher" and "lower" castes.

But no smaller sharers in the glory of the miracle are the people of Travancore, especially the Savarna Hindus who have accepted the great Proclamation in good grace and who have testified once more to the unique power of non-violence.

Gandhiji has called their response "a mass conversion of the Caste Hindus which no reformer or missionary could have wrought." And the response so deeply stirred him that he has uttered words about it which will be long remembered :

"It was the work of God who blessed the humble effort of man. I had thought that the State would at least have to post a strong police force at the main temples and that at least a few heads would be broken. But no. The process began with the biggest State temple, the one that the Maharajah visits himself. There was no political pressure here. It could not be imposed on a million people. I had no idea that there were nearly 2,000 temples in Travancore. I only knew that over ten years ago our volunteers had been severely hammered for even crossing a forbidden road near the temple at Vaikam. Now the humblest of the humble have entered the Vaikam temple without the slightest difficulty. The Proclamation did not enthuse me, though it was a solid thing. For I had feared that there might be a political motive behind it. But all my fears have been dispelled. That the orthodoxy, who used to swear by the letter of the ritual and made so much of the efficacy of temple worship being destroyed by even the Pariah's shadow, would fall in with the Proclamation is a thing I was not prepared for, so soon at any rate. But God has made possible what man could not have done."

If Gandhiji's joy, on receiving the reports of the working of the Proclamation before he had yet visited Travancore, was so great, one can understand the joy of those who saw the great conversion with their own eyes. This is what Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari wrote to me after a visit to Travancore :

"I suppose no joy can be enjoyed otherwise than by sharing with others. We want a wife, a friend, neighbours, or at the end of it all God! I imagine the flame of a lamp feels like that too, and sheds its light around for that reason. So I imagine the consecrated God in the temple felt the pain of suppression all these years. At least I fancied so that day, when the priest drew the screen aside and the Virgin burst into view at Kanyakumari. I wish you had been with me at the Cape that day. Ramachandran, Dr. M. E. Naidu and I went there to see how things fared there. We saw the Nadar boys and girls, about thirty of them, washing, talking, laughing and plunging in the beautiful tank of the temple right on the margin of the sea. If I had been a poet or a painter, it was a vision I could attempt to fix for others that did not see it with their eyes. But as it was, I could only wipe my tears. The tank was kept not like tanks in these parts, but as is the case with everything in Travancore Devaswam Administration, clean and tidy and beautiful, nicely screened into two divisions for men and women and water splendidly clean. 'We did not know that there was a place like this at all,' said our Harijan worker of the Harijan Sevak Sangh. How could he know? They could never dare enter, and the flight of steps that leads down into it turns at 90° and reaches to the water of the tank which is covered and completely protected from public view. His statement was literally true, and his joy that day was all the greater for it. The boys and girls dried themselves, and one of them a tiny thing shivered, as you know these little ones do for the cold. The sacred ashes warmed her up, and all of them danced and ran along to the temple. We went round and came to the sacred doorway. Even then I could not believe or realise that we could go in, straight in, with all this crowd, excluded all these two thousand years and perhaps more. The earliest Tamil books refer to this great Kumari temple. But we went in and nobody

stopped us! All the numerous brass lamps were lit. After a brief and tense interval, the screen was pushed aside, the bells sounded, and the goddess burst into view, beautiful, gorgeous, standing decorated, waiting eternally for her invisible partner! It was a joy. And you should have seen with me the boys standing in a row along the bars in corridor array, bending their necks forward and stroking their cheeks with their hands in token of prayer and repentance. Repentance for what? For our sins, I suppose! I can never forget the scene.

What a fool I am to rejoice so much over a mere reparation of a wrong that should never have been done or tolerated so long! But what joy is there in this world which is not mere reparation or reunion? That is the great trick of God. Good is good because of evil."

And this is what Sjt. G. Ramachandran, who had laboured arduously for the reform and whose heart bled at the delay in its coming, wrote :

"It was in the bus from Alleppey to Quilon that I heard the whole matter clinched in the mouth of an old Brahmin lady who said: It is God's play and the Maharajah can do nothing which God does not commmand.

Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari, who accepted our invitation and came to Travancore for a flying visit, himself watched the working of the Proclamation in five of our most important temples, and he was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude to find that the Proclamation was being worked in the completest manner. He was speechless when he saw the priests in the Anantapadmanabhaswami temple, Trivandrum, at Suchindram and at Cape Comorin, welcoming the Harijans and treating them with affection.

Let there be no doubt about what has happened. It has created a new mind and a new vision for Hinduism in Travancore and therethrough for Hinduism all over India and for religion in general. This great good that

has come to Hinduism, this Proclamation of supreme piety will strengthen the fibre in every religion and give everywhere the strength and the courage to go forward for the achievement of great spiritual ends."

But greater joy was yet in store for Gandhiji. I must devote the rest of the chapters to the great pilgrimage to Travancore. The reader will notice, in all the speeches chronologically reproduced in extenso in the second part of the book, how Gandhiji allowed the great awakening to soak into him, and how he went step by step indicating the implications of the Proclamation for the people of Travancore who had so nobly responded to it. The words must doubtless have soaked slowly through their responsive hearts as, burning with the holy zeal of achieving the equality that true Hinduism connotes, his words rose to a spiritual crescendo.

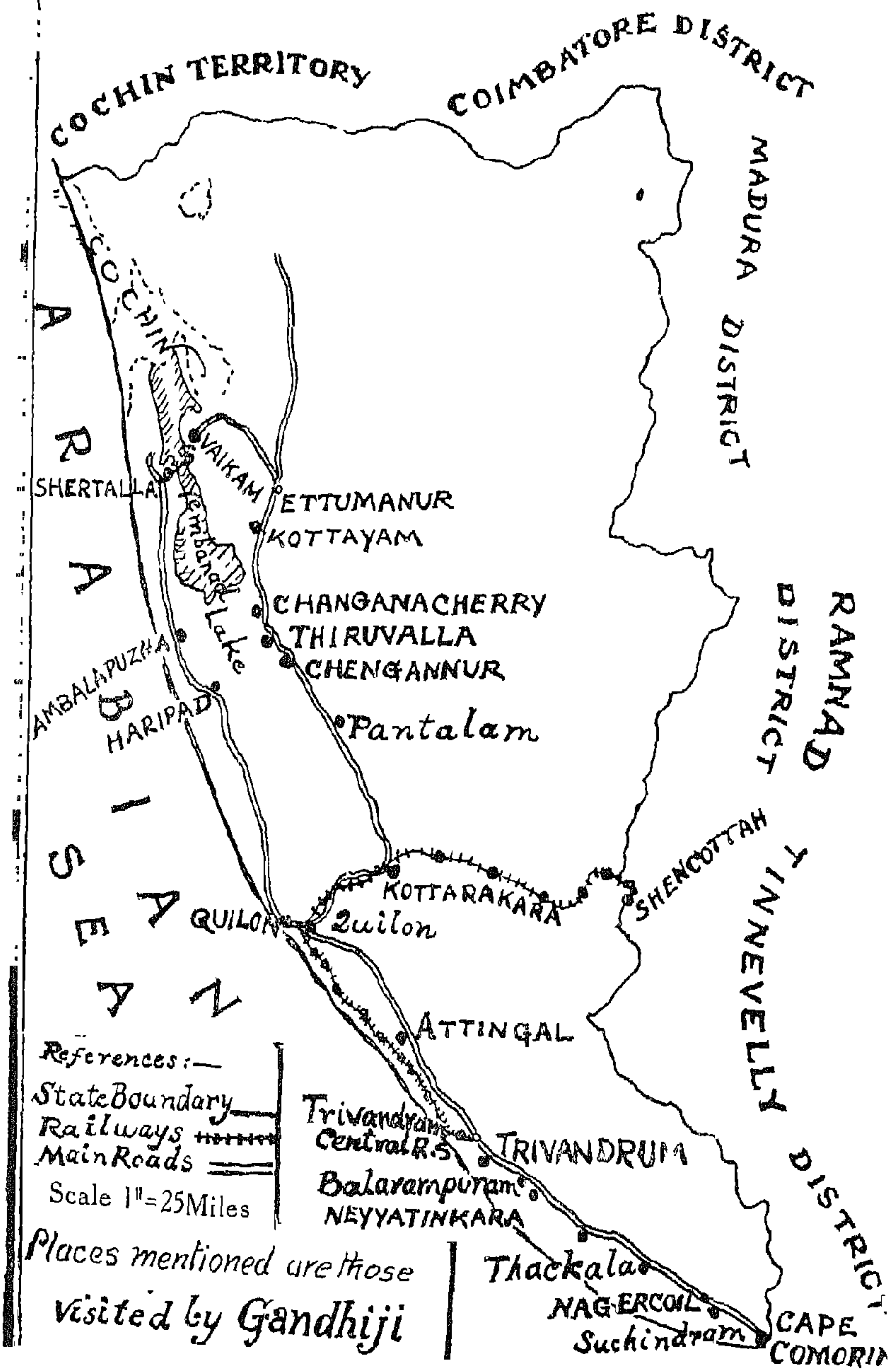
V

THE PILGRIMAGE

(1)

We left Poona for Trivandrum on the 10th of January. Gandhiji deliberately asked young Kanu, his grand-nephew, to arm himself this time with a *dilruba*. I slightly remonstrated. I said to Gandhiji: 'You always object to our taking superfluous articles of luggage. Now is my turn to object. Why add the *dilruba* this time? We have already added the carding bow and cotton. Why this musical instrument also?' He smiled and said: 'You are right. You may drop out the carding bow if you like, but not the *dilruba*. This visit to Travancore is going to be a pilgrimage. We shall have to have Tulsi Ramayan reading everywhere and sometimes, if God wills it, at public places also, and we cannot get a *dilruba* there.' I was silenced. I saw that Gandhiji was already mentally preparing himself for the great pilgrimage. And indeed preparation and prayer seemed to be needed. For a few hours before we arrived in Trivandrum he caught a severe cold the like of which he rarely gets. I was alarmed. The cold continued practically throughout the tour. But it did not seem to interfere with the routine. He went through the whole programme, which Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar had characterised as 'impossible', without coming to grief, and had the satisfaction of having poured out his whole soul before the hundreds of thousands he

MAP of TRAVANCORE



Places mentioned are those visited by Gandhiji

had met. Has it not been truly said —"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint"? It was really a renewal of strength from day to day.

This was his fourth visit to Travancore, three being exclusively for anti-untouchability work. But he could not call the foregoing visits so many pilgrimages as the visits did not ensure even the pilgrim's consolation of a visit to the famous temples in Travancore. The very first visit was to plead with the orthodox Savarnas and the State authorities to accord the Avarnas their elementary right to use all public roads. The second was part of a khadi tour, though even during that tour Gandhiji never omitted to emphasize the importance of abolishing the curse of untouchability. The first two had the hearty co-operation of the State; the third which took place in 1934 had not even the advantage of that co-operation. This the fourth one was essentially a pilgrimage — the pilgrimage of an untouchable now being accepted as a touchable, as Gandhiji put it, and it had the co-operation of the State. Twelve years is nothing when one considers the magnitude of the reform that has been brought about. Centuries ago Saint Nandanar went literally through the fiery ordeal in order to secure a *darshan* of the deity at Chidambaram. But his was a lonely penance. The suffering and the ordeals gone through by hundreds of thousands of people in close co-operation have secured for them all the *darshan* of the living God, not in one

temple but in all. But Nandanar's penance was enough to hand him down to posterity as a saint; the success of the efforts of those who have wrought for emancipation during the last twelve years does not raise anyone to sainthood, but opens the opportunity of sainthood to one and all. The condition is that they purify themselves.

The whole journey to Travancore lay through one seething mass of humanity. People thronged the stations at all hours of the day and night and made anything like rest or sleep impossible. They thronged even the stations where the train was not scheduled to stop, and they lined the roads in close proximity of which the train passed. Perhaps their enthusiasm exceeded on this occasion that shown on any previous occasions. So great was the joy of emancipation from age-old shackles. Our train stopped at a station called Shankaranayanarkovil. As the name indicated it was the place of a famous temple, and the temple too was visible from the train. In the course of a few words addressed to them Gandhiji said: "When will the temple I see in front of me be opened to all Harijans?" "Soon," came the reply. "So when I return from Travancore," said Gandhiji, "you will ask me to stop here to open this temple? Won't you?" And there was uproarious laughter and a chorus of voices—"Yes". Not to be beaten, Gandhiji said, "But I cannot accept an invitation to open a temple where all kinds of animals are offered for sacrifice, not for their faults, but for our own sins. There is no smriti which countenances these sacrifices. If there is, it is not a smriti. You must stop these sacrifices if you

ever offer them." At another place he gave a one-sentence message: "I hope to see during this pilgrimage of mine things that I never saw before, and also hope to see that this great Proclamation of the Maharajah was really deserved by the people." These words seemed to contain in themselves the germ of Gandhiji's speeches to be delivered in Travancore. The speech at the mammoth public meeting in Trivandrum contained — as indeed all his speeches, long or short, did — a full-hearted expression of thankfulness to His Highness the Maharajah and Her Highness the Maharani for their noble Proclamation; but it also contained a fervent appeal to the people to realize the implications of the Proclamation in order that it may bear permanent fruit.

Those who wanted to see the depth of joy that this Proclamation had given to the Avarnas ought to have seen the celebrations on the 13th of January at Trivandrum after the close of the public meeting. Several scores of thousands of Ezhavas had gathered there to take part in the thanksgiving and rejoicing, and they had gone to considerable expense in having the best and the most richly caparisoned elephants in the State to take part in the procession.

"How did the procession go off?" was the question that Gandhiji put to Sjt. M. Govindan, an ex-judge and Ezhava leader of the celebrations.

"Very well indeed," he said, beaming with joy. "The procession was over a mile long. All the best State elephants were there, one of them being the largest elephant in the world."

"But," said Gandhiji, twitting him, "surely you do not mean the largest in the world? It must be the largest in Travancore."

"No, Mahatmaji, it is the largest in the world."

"Have you seen the elephant fair at Sonepur in Bihar where thousands of elephants assemble every year?"

"No, Mahatmaji. But this was the largest elephant we know."

"That's better. And how about the fireworks?"

"Very successful. The rockets could be seen from villages situated several miles from here."

"And did His Highness give his *darshan*?"

"Why, Mahatmaji, he saw the procession himself, and rode along with the procession for part of the distance."

Well if this was the joy of an ex-judge, one can have a measure of the joy of the rank and file amongst them. Socially and economically not much inferior to the Savarnas, the one million Ezhavas of Travancore were feeling this exclusion from temple entry the most. In fact untouchability meant nothing else to them. The removal of the exclusion thus means for them the abolition of untouchability.

But what about the less articulate ones? The Pulayas indeed had gone into the temples. But what about [those who were regarded as still humbler than they? He appealed to the Ezhavas to make all the Avarnas full and equal sharers in their joy.

Their other duty was the duty of self-puri-

fication commensurate with the mighty reform that they had secured. "I hope you will make a wise and religious use of the Proclamation," he said at a big meeting of the Pulayas at Venganoor. "It depends upon our mental condition whether we gain something or do not gain anything by going to the temples. We have to approach these temples in a humble and penitent mood. They are so many houses of God. Of course God resides in every human form, indeed in every particle of His creation, everything that is on this earth. But since we very fallible mortals do not appreciate the fact that God is everywhere, we impute special sanctity to temples and think that God resides there. And so when we approach these temples we must cleanse our bodies, our minds and our hearts, and we should enter them in a prayerful mood and ask God to make us purer men and purer women for having entered their portals. And if you will take this advice of an old man, this physical deliverance that you have secured will be a deliverance of the soul."

"Of course," he said at another meeting, "it is open to the Savarnas and Avarnas to make the gracious Proclamation perfectly useless,—the Savarnas may be sullenly discontented and not purify their hearts of untouchability, and the Avarnas can make it perfectly ineffective by misunderstanding the grace of the Proclamation and by not going to temples in the right spirit. The Maharajah, the Maharani and the Dewan have done their duty by issuing the Proclamation which has no reservation, mental or otherwise, behind it; and if both Savarnas and

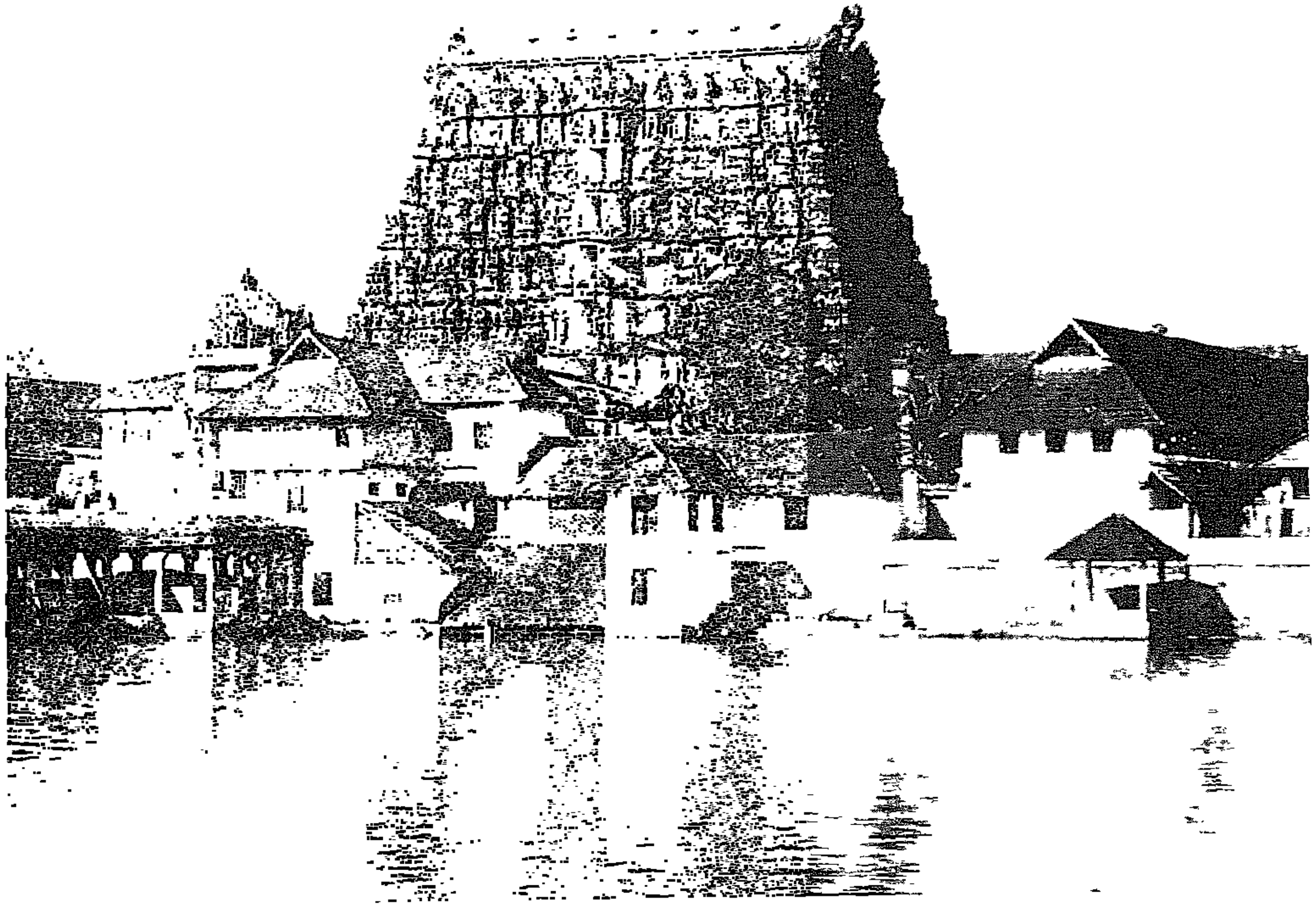
Avarnas prove by their real religious conduct that they were worthy of this high act of State, believe me Travancore will go down in history as the saviour of Hindu religion which was in danger of perishing. For I have seen nothing during these long years of struggling against untouchability, to modify my opinion that if untouchability lives Hinduism dies. I wish I could infect all of you with the same belief and that in every one of your acts you will show that the taint of untouchability has been removed from your hearts."

The organizers of the tour so arranged that Gandhiji should make a point of visiting every important temple – temples he deliberately refrained from entering during his previous tours. The great speech at Trivandrum was made after he had visited the great temple of Ananta Padmanabha – His Highness' own temple. As we went South towards Cape Comorin, we came to a small place called Tiruvattar where a temple believed to be the most ancient in Travancore stands. Here three years ago Gandhiji had to address a meeting under the shadow of the imposing walls of this temple, and he happened to utter these words: "The temple doors are closed against us today, but God willing they will have to be opened to us soon." Imagine the ecstasy and thanksgiving that overflowed Gandhiji's heart as he addressed a meeting after having been taken through the vast spaces of this great temple. Sitting on the top of a high flight of steps that leads to the temple he addressed some ten thousand people who listened to him in solemn silence: "The sins of past ages have been

obliterated by literally a stroke of the pen. *Though it was the name of the Maharajah that traced the signature over the Proclamation, the spirit behind was of the Lord Padmanabhaswami.* I understood only today the beautiful legend that passes current in Travancore about the Maharajah. As you all know—I suppose every child in Travancore knows that the Maharajahs in Travancore are known as Padmanabhadas. They are so many Viceroys of Padmanabhaswami, and as I understood yesterday the Maharajah has to go from day to day to that temple and to receive instructions about the day's work from Padmanabhaswami. That the thing does not happen as I have described to you as between man and man, is true, but the spirit behind the legend is an excellent spirit. It means that the Maharajah may not do anything that is wrong or sinful and has not the stamp of God's approval. And so as I said it is the spirit of God that moved the Maharajah to take the great step he has taken, and I wish to congratulate you who are the beneficiaries under the great Proclamation. It is a great act whose significance we are yet too near in time to realise. During my last tour I addressed a gathering outside the forbidding-looking temple walls as they then appeared to me. I regarded myself voluntarily as a Pulaya or a Pariah, the lowest amongst the low, a Harijan amongst Harijans. But the Maharajah himself as I have now learnt bears the title of servant of God, *i. e.* Harijan, and proudly signs himself as such. No doubt he is the first among God's servants, let us hope by right of service.

He is not the first lord among lords and masters. In service there is always open and meritorious competition. It demands no reward, no distinction. Let us look at the Proclamation in this light. Let Nambudiris and other Brahmans and the so-called high-caste people of Travancore rise to the occasion and be voluntarily Harijans amongst Harijans, servants of God, and let all the world know by their action that in virtue of the Proclamation there is none high and none low but all are equal in the eyes of God."

As I have humbly shared the privilege of going into these celebrated temples, I have stood dazed and stupefied at the vastness of the conception of those who planned these temples and at the pettiness of man, whom when darkness enveloped not even these temples helped. Indeed he made these sources of light so many caves of darkness! I wish I had the pen to describe at least one of the numerous temples I have seen during this tour. Travancore does not yet boast an archaeologist of the genius and industry of Rice who prepared those memorable ten volumes of Epigraphia Carnatica. When we asked anyone about the dates of these temples they vaguely said: 'thousands of years.' When they were more precise, they said: 'five thousand years.' Ancient they must be, certainly more ancient than any other shrines in India, and yet not pre-Aryan, as they enshrine all Aryan gods — Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesh, Krishna, Rama and so on, and yet the architecture is so unlike any other architecture in the north of India. The main image standing or seated at the heart of the shrines is surrounded by a series of



Anantapadmanabhpuram Temple at Trivandrum

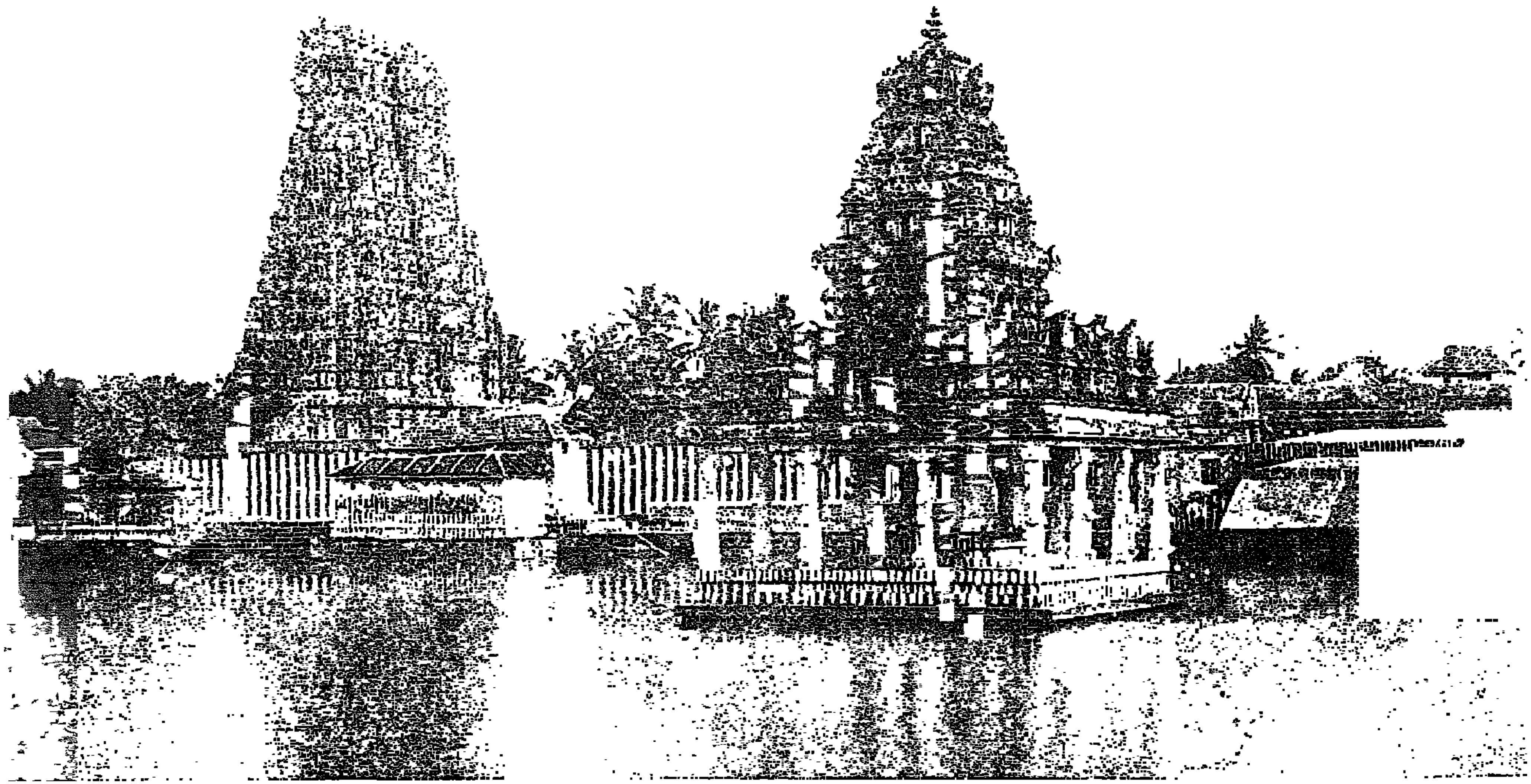
symmetrical courts which have numerous subordinate shrines, and the whole is supported by massive pillars of immense size and beautiful design. The Ananta Padmanabha temples at Trivandrum (Tiru-Ananta-puram) and Tiruvattar have huge images of Lord Vishnu reclining on the thousand-hooded Ananta cobra The temple at Suchindram, perhaps vaster than either of the two, has the image of Shiva, and the temple at Kanyakumari that of the Virgin Uma who won the Lord Shiva by dint of her extraordinary austerities. The other parts of the temples have various images - the Trivandrum temple has a huge hall of pillars containing a gallery of images of various deities constructed with consummate art, and the Suchindram pillars represent in stone the whole story of Ramayana. The floor in front of the Ananta Padmanabha temples at Trivandrum and Tiruvattar is one whole block of stone about 25 feet by 25 feet, and the gopuram over the gate of the Suchindram temple is the biggest and the most elaborately constructed in the whole of India.

These are crude and meagre details. What words can convey the magnitude of the conception of the Lord who lies in undisturbed repose over the universe which is as uncomfortable as the coils of a hydra-headed cobra can be, and who when contemplated with concentration relieves one of all fear of birth and death? What pen can convey the matchless austerities of Uma who elected to win thereby as her consort no earthly sovereign but one who had smeared himself with the ashes of all earthly passions, who lived in close proxi-

mity of death, and who was at once a Lord of terrors and of compassion? Legend connects the story of Uma with the Shiva in Suchindram temple a few miles away. I love rather to think of Uma, whose feet are washed by the Indian Ocean with his two hands the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, winning by her penance the Lord who has his abode in Kailasa, the northernmost point of India. Even thus can penance storm the gates of Heaven!

I have in an earlier chapter described the legend associated with the Ananta Padmanabhapuram temple at Trivandrum. Look at the following legend about the Suchindram temple:

"Sage Attri and his wife Anasuya renowned for her chastity were doing penance in a hermitage near the modern Suchindram. The *Trimurtis* desirous of testing the chastity of Anasuya came here in the guise of three Brahmins when Attri happened to be absent from home and requested *bhiksha* (alms) of her. According to the rules of Hindu hospitality an *Atithi* or guest is a divine person and should be propitiated at any cost. She received them with due hospitality, and when they were seated for meals they informed her that all three of them had made a vow that they would not eat anything if served by a person who wore any garment, in other words she should serve them nude. Finding herself in a predicament and at the same time confident of her own purity, the holy matron sprinkled a little holy water upon them with a prayer to the Almighty that they be immediately converted into babes. This was effected and she fed the babes with milk and nursed them. While she was thus fondling these children, Parvati, Lakshmi and Saraswati, the respective wives of Shiva, Vishnu and Brahma, came to the spot in search



Suchindram Temple with Tank

of their lords and finding them all in this condition gave themselves up to severe penance. God Mahadeva appeared before them and granted their request. The three babes were converted into three Gods, and Anasuya found before her the *Trimurtis*, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in their own forms. Anasuya fell at their feet, asked forgiveness for having made them children and prayed that she should have three similar children, and accordingly a son called Dattatreya was born to her who combined in himself all the essential virtues of the *Trimurtis*. It is in commemoration of this event that all the three deities, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva, are worshipped here."

No wonder that the name of Devi Anasuya should be deemed to be purifying and thousands upon thousands of women of all ages have cherished the tradition associated with her name. The temple is universally acknowledged as a place for self-purification, Indra also having been said to have earned his expiation here.

The antiquity of some of the temples like that of the Kanyakumari at the Land's End is unchallengeable, and there is not only a mention of the temple in the Mahabharata but even in *Periplus* where the author has recorded: "Those who wish to consecrate the closing part of their lives to religion come hither and bathe and pledge themselves to celibacy." Manimekhalai, a well known Tamil work of the 2nd Century, narrates a tradition to the effect that Sati, the wife of a Brahman of Benares, walked all the way to Cape Comorin, bathed in the sea there, worshipped at the feet of the goddess Kanyakumari, and was purged of her sin of unchastity. So great was the value

attached to virtue, so great was the faith in the power of penance in those days.

But the great lessons at the back of these legends were forgotten with the passage of time, we clung to and strove to protect the crust, which well-nigh crushed the kernel, and ultimately forgot that there was any kernel inside. Not unless we realize the kernel once again will these temples prove to be the instruments of our emancipation. It was some such thing that Gandhiji had in mind when he had to face an assemblage of something over 50,000 people at Nagercoil. He just left the thought before the meeting, trusting to some future occasion to develop it:

"This untouchability was, and I suppose I must still say it is, a weedy growth upon Hinduism, so much so that it threatened to smother the finest flowers of Hinduism. I regard this Proclamation as a very brave attempt — an outstanding attempt — to rid Hinduism of the curse of untouchability, and in issuing the Proclamation the Maharajah and his advisers have laid the axe at the root of untouchability. But the Proclamation will be of no use if there is no response on the part of the Savarna and Avarna Hindus. Ever since my coming to Travancore, I have been doing nothing but visiting temples which were until a little while ago forbidden ground to me by my own choice. So long as these temples were barred against the major part of the Hindu population of Travancore the temples could go on as they liked. The Proclamation is the beginning of the process of purification of Hinduism, and in this process both Savarnas and Avarnas have to play their due part. It would be a great reflection on Savarna Hindus if the untouchables of yesterday were to be left to their own

resources. It is therefore absolutely necessary for you and me to find out the place temples have in the growth of Hinduism. You and I have to find out whether a living God resides in these temples. I assure you that our search will be in vain unless we put our hearts into it and apply our minds to it. In all humility I fancy that I know how that search is to be made. But I must seek some other and better opportunity for making that enquiry. It may be sufficient for the time being if I have succeeded in stimulating your appetite for that search."

In discovering its duty arising from the Proclamation and in giving effect to it, Travancore might well prove the torch-bearer for the rest of India.

VI

THE PILGRIMAGE

(2)

As the days went by, the pilgrimage became so to say a sacred bath in the great Ganges of revival and selfpurification that is sweeping over the land. We had been told that there was sulkiness in several quarters, that in some orthodox areas like Vaikam there was a move on the part of the most orthodox to boycott the temples. But we found evidence of no such thing. Gandhiji addressed meetings of tens of thousands of people at various places in the South and the North of Travancore, but there was not one dissentient voice. In the temples themselves, thousands of Savarnas rubbed shoulders with thousands of Avarnas, and among the most understanding of the Savarnas the change of heart drew tears of joy from the eyes of spectators and a confession from Gandhiji that " it would have been a stupid act of foolishness on my part if I had not visited Travancore, if only to see this temple and to see the affectionate way in which the Harijans were taken into the temple." These words were uttered at Kutamanoor, a Nambudiri stronghold, where Nambudiris not only attended the meeting in vast numbers but showed an enthusiasm and fraternal spirit that was nothing short of the revelation of a miracle. The principal temple trustee would not be satisfied until he walked side by side with Gandhiji holding the

umbrella over Gandhiji's head, and until he gently pushed forward a number of Harijan young men in front of Gandhiji and took them right up to the door of the *garbhagriha*—the *sanctum sanctorum*. He had invited a number of Harijans to take part in the festivities, these were playing a circular dance in front of the temple as we went there, and on our approach led the procession into the temple. To the principal Nambudiri tantri and trustee who organized the whole affair, it seemed as though he was going through a purificatory rite, as he took the Harijan young men and women in front of the procession and insisted on their having the *prasadam*. The words revival and a new birth were thus not idly uttered by Gandhiji, who expressed a hope that the Savarna Hindus of Travancore would carry out the Proclamation to the fullest extent and "deserve to be called the liberators of Hinduism, if not its saviours." This temple is said to date back to the time of Parashurama who built it, and not even the Maharajahs were supposed to enter it before this revival.

At Chenganoor Gandhiji was invited to open for the first time a private temple belonging to the Nambudiris and situated right in the heart of their private mansions. The Nambudiri women observe a kind of *purda* by veiling their faces by means of a big palm leaf fan when they approach strangers. Scores of these women assembled in a hall in front of the temple. They had discarded their *purda* and were anxious to see Gandhiji leading a procession of Harijans right to the door of their private shrine. The principal men flung

themselves in front of Gandhiji, and said, not to flatter him, but to express the feelings that were welling up in their hearts: 'Our house is indeed purified today.' An old Nambudiri lady, who must be nearer eighty than seventy, gave Gandhiji a precious necklace of gold and pearls, and the Pulaya boys who hesitated to go in – a thing they had never in their wildest imagination believed they could do – were led by the chief man and given *prasadam*.

At Kottarakara Sjt. K. N. Nambudripad invited Gandhiji to open his principal private temple and declared open seventeen other temples belonging to him. He has a temple in Cochin too. He is willing to open it, but evidently he awaits the State Proclamation there.

The joy of the Avarnas can hardly be described in words. It was heart-felt, full of thanksgiving, overflowing, delirious. They felt the visible embrace of brotherhood, and enjoyed the *darshan* of the deity as though they had really experienced the sight of God. They naturally flung themselves before the deity, but they also flung themselves before His Highness and Gandhiji. His Highness escaped the embarrassment as he does not often appear in public. Gandhiji could not escape it, as he is always one of the public, belongs to them! A famous verse thus eulogizes the guru:

गुरु गोविंद दोनो खडे किसको लागु पाय।
बलिहारी गुरुदेवकी जिसने गोविंद दियो बताय।

(Both the Lord and the guru are in front of me; whom shall I do my obeisance? Him will I do it

first who showed me the Lord.) That represents somewhat the feelings of the vast multitudes whose joy and thankfulness knew no bounds.

Critics have often said that the temple entry agitation was a creation entirely of the reformers and had nothing to do with the Harijans who never cared for temple entry. These critics, if they were sincere and if proofs would bring any conviction to them, should have gone to Travancore and witnessed the spontaneity of the rejoicings over the Proclamation. In a place called Aranmula we were put up in a Government camp-shed which overlooked a beautiful river called Pampa. Our meeting was on the other bank. Hours before the meeting thousands had gathered there, but when Gandhiji went to board the boat which took him across, there were thousands more who stood in the waist-deep water and simply obliterated the river for several hundreds of yards. They followed the boat and swelled the original meeting. Even here they stood under the hot sun without making any noise and listened to the speech as best they could.

In Vaikam the crowds that lined the streets leading to the temple — streets which were scenes of Satyagraha 12 years ago — and the crowds in the temple and at the meeting were numerically perhaps the largest. It was something to have passed those brief hours with them and to have participated in their rejoicings.

But if these scenes of rejoicings filled one with joy and thanksgiving, the scenes in the temples at prayer time were sacred memories, ennobling and uplifting. As a rule the Travancore crowds

are the most disciplined in India, but their behaviour in temples whenever Gandhiji held the prayer meetings was a sight for the gods to see. At Takazi, where a private temple was thrown open to the Harijans and where the opening of several other private temples was announced, Gandhiji was invited to go on the silence day. There was no rush, no scramble for *darshan*, no noise. A meeting of about two to three thousand men and an equal number of women kept to their seats in a corner of the vast courtyard of the temple, as Gandhiji with a party of Harijans went into the temple and worshipped there and was taken round the myriad-lighted temple. I enjoyed the unique privilege of explaining the various parts of the evening prayer to them, and they listened to the translation, sentence by sentence, in rapt attention, and then took part in the actual prayer in silent stillness which filled the whole atmosphere. The scene was repeated night after night at Vaikam and Kottayam and other places, and even Gandhiji's heart, which has never suffered from any lack of prayerfulness and faith and devotion, experienced a fulness of faith and a new meaning of temple-going never experienced before.

No wonder the Nambudiri trustee who had led the fierce opposition against the opening of the temple roads at Vaikam to Harijans twelve years ago, came specially to see Gandhiji after the meeting and the temple-prayer, to express his satisfaction at what had happened, and told him that he had no doubt that he (Gandhiji) would now inspire a new faith in the people and attract a

larger number of temple-goers than usual. "I have not been a temple-goer," said Gandhiji to him, "but now that this liberty has come to me all of a sudden, I feel fascinated, and the divine stillness that surrounded the prayer meeting under the *ashwattha* tree in the temple-yard now stimulates me *to find new ways and means for attracting people* to temples. My temple-going is not an idle thing. It is a definitely sacred thing that has come to me in my life at an opportune moment."

"Would you say anything about the mode of worship?"

"I will not criticize it. The new thing has come upon me with a newness which humbles me. I refuse to look at it with the eye of a critic. One thing certainly I have noticed, *viz.* the want of intelligence and devoutness on the part of priests."

For the first time at the public meeting in Quilon Gandhiji summed up the credal belief of Hinduism in an Upanishadic *mantra*, and thereafter at every meeting gave lucid and simple commentaries on the numerous implications of that all-comprehensive *mantra*. He gave a literal exposition of it for the first time at the public meeting at Quilon, then devoted the whole of his speech at Haripad to the same *mantra*, and at other meetings demonstrated step by step the fact that the whole of Hinduism was verily contained in that *mantra*. He described it at one of these meetings as the golden key for the solution of all the difficulties and doubts that may assail one's heart. "Remember that one verse of the Ishopanishad and forget all about the other scriptures. You can of course drown yourselves and be

suffocated in the ocean of scriptures. They are good for the learned if they will be humble and wise, but for the ordinary man in the street nothing but that *mantra* is necessary to carry him across the ocean."

The Kottayam speech, part of which was addressed to the vast mass of Christians who formed part of the public meeting there, was also a sort of commentary on this great *mantra*. Peace on earth and goodwill among mankind needed nothing more nor less than an acceptance of the truth underlying the *mantra*, which was no abstruse formula, no exclusive credal doctrine, but a universal law :

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

"God the Ruler pervades all there is in this Universe. Therefore renounce and dedicate all to Him and then enjoy or use the portion that may fall to thy lot. Never covet anybody's possessions."

Some of my Christian friends have suggested that the Kottayyam speech was a kind of conversion propaganda addressed to Christians. Nothing could be farther from Gandhiji's thought. It was not an appeal to the adherents of other faiths to be converted to Hinduism, but an appeal to them to realise the essence of Hinduism, not to decry it in their ignorance, and if they at all cared for peace and goodwill to help the Hindus — Savarnas and Avarnas both — of Travancore to realise the lofty spirit of Hinduism. In their tolerance and respect for Hinduism based on an understanding of it lay the value of their adherence to Islam or Christianity.

VII

THE PILGRIMAGE

(3)

How a little incident impresses itself on Gandhiji's memory and becomes pregnant with meaning, was apparent from the way in which Gandhiji used for the purpose of his pilgrimage the story he had heard from the priest in the Anantapadmanabhapuram temple at Trivandrum. 'Padmanabhadas' – servant of Padmanabha – is a familiar title of H. H. the Maharajah, but we were told for the first time by the priest that not only did the Maharajah worship in the temple every day but that he made a point of taking leave of the Deity whenever he left the State and of worshipping the Deity on return before resuming the reins of government. That gave the clue to Gandhiji for many of his speeches, and both for the benefit of the ruler and the ruled he dwelt at length on the implications of the title 'Padmanabhadas'.

When exactly the Maharajahs came to assume this title Gandhiji did not know but would have liked to have known. This is what the Travancore Manual says about the origin:

"For the better safety of his ancient house and the consolidation of his acquired dominions so as to make internal disturbances in the country impossible and make his own position secure, the thoughtful Maharajah determined upon the bold step of dedicating his kingdom to Shri Padmanabhaswamy, the tutelary Deity of the Royal house of Travancore. Accordingly on the morning of

the 5th Makaram 925 M. E. (January 1750 A. D.), accompanied by the heir-apparent and all the other male and female members of the Royal family, the Maharajah with his Prime Minister proceeded to Shri Padmanabha's temple where all the priests and Yogakkars had also been summoned. His Highness laid his State sword before the God on the *Ottakkal mantapam* and made over the whole territory to the Devaswam and assumed its management as the vassal of that Deity. From this day forward he styled himself *Shri Padmanabha Das*, meaning "the servant of Shri Padmanabhaswamy". This stroke of policy had the desired effect and the people of Travancore have ever after regarded the country as the possession of God and the person of the sovereign as His representative to them on earth. None of them would dare to do or speak ill of their sovereign for by so doing they would be guilty of *Swamidrohan* or blaspheming the Deity."

I should hesitate to characterise this dedication as a "bold stroke of policy". We of a latter-day generation have no idea of the faith that inspired the old rulers. Raja Marthanda Varma was humble enough to own his insignificance and gave back to the Deity he revered what he knew he had received from Him. It must also be remembered that the idea of this dedication did not originate with Raja Marthanda Varma. Lithic records show that even as early as the 14th century the Maharajahs of Travancore called themselves "*Shri Padmanabha-padakamala-Paramaradhaks*". *Padmanabhadas* is only a beautiful abbreviation of this older appellation. Raja Marthanda Varma whole-heartedly adopted the noble tradition and gave it a new meaning. It was reserved for Gandhiji to clothe it with a newer meaning full of great implications.

But tradition can both ennoble and bind. It must not be forgotten that even untouchability was traditionally accepted by the Hindu State a little while ago. There is in the State Museum at Trivandrum an ivory model of the human skeleton which was prepared specially for Raja Marthanda Varma (not the first Marthanda Varma, but another who flourished in the sixties) who wanted to study human anatomy but whose Hinduism prevented him from touching bones! And I have already referred in a previous chapter to the story of Lord Roberts about Raja Rama Varma.

That tradition of untouchability is now broken, and only the other day His Highness the Maharajah, says a press report, refused to worship in a temple in Attingal which has not yet been opened in the terms of the Proclamation. No wonder Gandhiji said in his speech at Vaikam, "I verily believe that when all else about Travancore is forgotten, this one act of the Maharajah (*i.e.* the Proclamation) will be remembered by future generations with gratitude."

Gandhiji met a vast number of Ezhavas, leaders and the rank and file, in Travancore, but this time the only feeling they had to express was that of thankfulness and rejoicing. In 1927 a deputation of Ezhavas and Cherumas waited on him with questions such as these: "How shall we deal with injustice? Should we remain in Hinduism or should we not? Do you hope for a purified Hinduism within a reasonable time?" In 1934 they were more resentful and aggressive, and questioned even the necessity for religion. 'Caste and religion are the enemies of Harijans,' they said, and invited

Gandhiji to discard both. These sceptical and atheistic voices were, thanks to the Proclamation, conspicuous by their absence during the present pilgrimage. At Varkala a Swami, speaking more on his own behalf than of the Ezhavas, reminded Gandhiji of the late Shri Narayan Guru's dictum, 'One Religion, one Caste, one God', and declared that 'in a caste-ridden country even Mahatmas are not free.' But he too did not decry religion, and at Shertallai, from where Gandhiji had received those resentful letters in 1934, had met this time a vast gathering of Ezhavas to celebrate the Temple Entry Proclamation and to express their thankfulness to His Highness. The Dewan was specially invited to address what was called the Temple Entry Session of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, and the old cries seem to have disappeared. But Gandhiji harked back to the earlier days, and in addressing them took the opportunity of advising them not to be swept by occasional storms of passion but to hold on to the moorings. "Last time," he said, "when I passed through Cochin and Travancore I had the pleasure of meeting several Ezhava friends. Many of them were very bitter against Hinduism and Hindus. They took pride in saying that they were atheists and no Hindus. They would gladly burn the books which passed under the name of Hindu scriptures I know that this Proclamation has steadied these unbelievers. I sympathized with them at that moment, as those who discussed with me will bear testimony. They could not help being bitter and atheistic when they saw that it was the hand of Savarnas that was held against them.

They were bound to take the Savarna belief and practices as an index of true Hindu belief and practices. But now they know that the Savarna heart is changed. In passing through Travancore I have found no opposition among the Savarnas I have met during this pilgrimage. I have not discovered any distinction between man and man, and if these crowds contained thousands of erstwhile untouchables, they also contained thousands of so-called Savarnas. But assume for one moment that the Savarna heart is not changed. Why should your religion depend upon their change of heart? Our religion ought to be totally independent of the conduct of other people towards us. Our religion has its source from God within. And if we will be true to our God, we will never forsake the faith we derive from Him. With God as our Guide, Master, Ruler, in everything that we may do, we can defy the whole world's opposition and stick to our faith. And I dare to say that the *mantra* whose meaning I have given you is calculated to satisfy the highest aspirations of any being on earth. May it satisfy your aspirations also and may God give you strength to live up to it."

But the pilgrimage was not just a tour for participating in rejoicings. As Gandhiji said to an interviewer recently, "it was not a tour merely of exultation, but of self-introspection, self-purification and a warning. We could not afford to rest on our oars. We must be more vigilant, wider-awake and see our work through."

He gave at one place a gentle but stern rebuke to those who seemed to entertain the complacent

feeling that everything had been achieved, that "the religion has been purified," and that "all social inequalities have been removed and the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man has been effected, and we are in the happy land of Ramarajya in every sense of the term." In fact these were the actual words used in an address that was presented to him. So he said, "I know you have made these bold assertions in pardonable enthusiasm. But now I would ask you to abide by your statements and prove the validity of the assertions made here by your worthy conduct. I should not wonder if you were to prove equal to the assertions you have made here, because as you have given me the information this is a Nambudiri stronghold and this is a private Nambudiri temple that they have generously and whole-heartedly opened to the Harijans. The way to live up to every assertion is by every individual doing these very things in his or her own life, and I tell you that a life of spirituality truly lived is far more infectious than all the microbes put together can prove on this earth. And whereas we dread all these infections and would rather escape them, this is an infection which we would all welcome."

But did Gandhiji return from Travancore an enthusiastic believer in temples as they are today? Would he not purify the present temple-worship, and would he not educate the priests and the temple-goers? These and similar questions have been asked him.

He answered them briefly in the course of the interview I have referred to:

" I certainly left Travancore with spiritual treasures that I had newly discovered. For what I saw there was vastly beyond my expectation and more than delighted my heart. The temples gave me a loftier and nobler idea of temples and temple-worship. I had visited temples before in North India but I had not done so in a devout spirit, and they had failed to stir me. But the majestic Travancore temples spoke to me. Every carving, every little image, every little oil-lamp had a meaning for me. But that does not mean that I am satisfied with everything. I put my revolutionary plan before His Highness in my last speech, for I look upon the Proclamation itself as revolutionary."

At Pandalai he made a fervent appeal to the Maharajah and the Dewan, and also to the people to do their part, and finish the work of ending untouchability root and branch, not only in Travancore but in all parts of India.

The appeal to the Maharajah about the spiritual renovation of the temples and the spiritual equipment of the temple-priests, who "should not be ignorant people following their calling for a livelihood, but men proud of their privilege of bringing the message of God to temple-goers, showing by their own conduct and their life that these temples are abodes of divinity," was of course of a general nature, but was occasioned by certain facts observed by Gandhiji. Thus at one place a number of Brahmans were chanting verses in front of the image. Gandhiji asked them if they would chant the Ishopanishad for him. To our great surprise they not only did not know the verses by heart, but they seemed to be innocent of even the name of this Upanishad. At another place a priest, who was quite alert and active and knew a number of

languages, was on his own admission innocent of Sanskrit. The conditions in other temples, I dare say, are better, but if we are to make the temples "repositories of Hinduism" and capable of "imparting spiritual power", a temple with an ignorant or mercenary priest should not be tolerated.

Indeed the Devaswom Department's Administration Report contains interesting details of the work being done by the State in the direction indicated by Gandhiji. "The year" (1935–36), says the report, "was one of a general religious awakening among the Hindu population of the State consequent on the measures taken towards the development of the cultural side of Hindu worship, such as the expounding of religious subjects through lectures, Harikathas, and the holding of religious conventions on a large scale." The "Shri Chithrodaya Deva Pooja Patasala" opened at Thiruvella in 1935 is making steady progress. "The study of the Vedas and the *mantras* demands a good deal of repetition and concentration, and the period of one year allowed for the whole course was found in actual practice to be quite inadequate. The necessity for the extension of the term of studies from one to two years, the enlargement of the present syllabus by suitably supplementing the training in Vedas, *mantras*, and the inclusion of a course of general instruction in the Sanskrit language thus became imperative . . . The necessary proposals were submitted by me to Government and Government were pleased to sanction the revised scheme which was given effect to from 1–1–1111 (*i. e.* 1936 A. D.)." Steps are

also being taken to have "a Tantri College opened for imparting instructions to candidates in Samskrit, Vedas, Vedangas, Samhitas, Tantras, Shastras, Yoga practices, etc., so as to make them ideal priests for service in the Devaswoms."

Then there were religious discourses given by "erudite lecturers and persons of acknowledged piety and reputation in religious scholarship," and these were "attended by thousands of people of all classes and communities." Then there were religious conventions. The convention at Kottayam included "lectures on Hinduism and exposition of Puranic stories by persons of acknowledged piety", "display of indigenous arts such as Chakkiyarkoothu, Patakom, etc., musical demonstrations, Harikathas", and so on. "One peculiar feature of the convention at Thiruvella," says the report, was that "there was complete silence and rapt attention notwithstanding the fact that the subject matter of the lectures was more serious, abstract and technical than on other occasions." Daily *bhajans* are being held in almost all the temples, and the Commissioner says that he has already "addressed the Assistant Commissioners of Devaswoms on the desirability of opening classes to teach subjects connected with the Hindu religion in all important Devaswoms on Sundays and other holidays." A central Religious Library is now under construction at Trivandrum, and a serious effort is being made to revive and promote Kathakali, Chakkiyarkoothu, Patakams, Koodiyattam and Panchavadyams, which represent the fine arts peculiar to Travancore.

The appeal to raise the economic and social condition of the Harijans was no less important than the one for the spiritual renovation of temples. Some of the temples have jewellery worth lakhs of rupees, the Anantapadmanabhapuram Temple in Trivandrum having numerous pots and utensils made of solid gold. There are in some of the temples vast halls which can seat two to three thousand Brahmans to dinner at a time, and on certain occasions they are thus fed and feasted. A little dialogue that Gandhiji had in the Harijan Boys' Hostel at Trivandrum shows what Gandhiji felt as he returned from the temple full of gold and jewellery:

"We badly need two good cows," said Sjt. Govindan. "Can't you send them from Gujarat?"

"Yes," said Gandhiji, laughing, "give me the money and I send you the cows."

"But we have no money."

"Why not steal one of the golden pots from the great State Temple?" said Gandhiji raising more laughter. "No, stealing is not the thing, for theft must be a thing unknown in a Hindu State like Travancore. But begging for a good purpose, like feeding Harijan boys, can't be unknown. You tell the authorities that if they can afford to pour out milk for the Brahmans from those golden pots, would they not pour out a little buttermilk for the Harijan boys from brass pots, now that they have abolished untouchability?"

In fact the complete spiritual renovation of temples means that every part of them must

belong to every one in the community, so much so that no one may be tempted to cast hungry eyes on their riches and splendour.

It is gratifying to note that Gandhiji's appeal is already finding a spontaneous response. The Dewan declared recently at a memorable meeting of the Pulayas that the Proclamation was not an end in itself but the beginning of the end, the first step in the rehabilitation of the State. He asked the people to shed both the superiority and the inferiority complex, declared that all words signifying "depressed" or "lower classes" were going to be abolished henceforth from all State documents, and looked forward to a time when all the distinctions of "high" and "low" would be a thing of the past.

The State had thus not only withdrawn its recognition, which it had until a little while ago given, to untouchability, but had thus proclaimed it to be a thing to be eschewed. The people had now to eradicate it from their hearts, and in this the good Dewan promised the State's hearty co-operation.

Travancore is known throughout India as a beauty-spot, but a scornful critic might well with Bishop Heber have said about it some time ago:

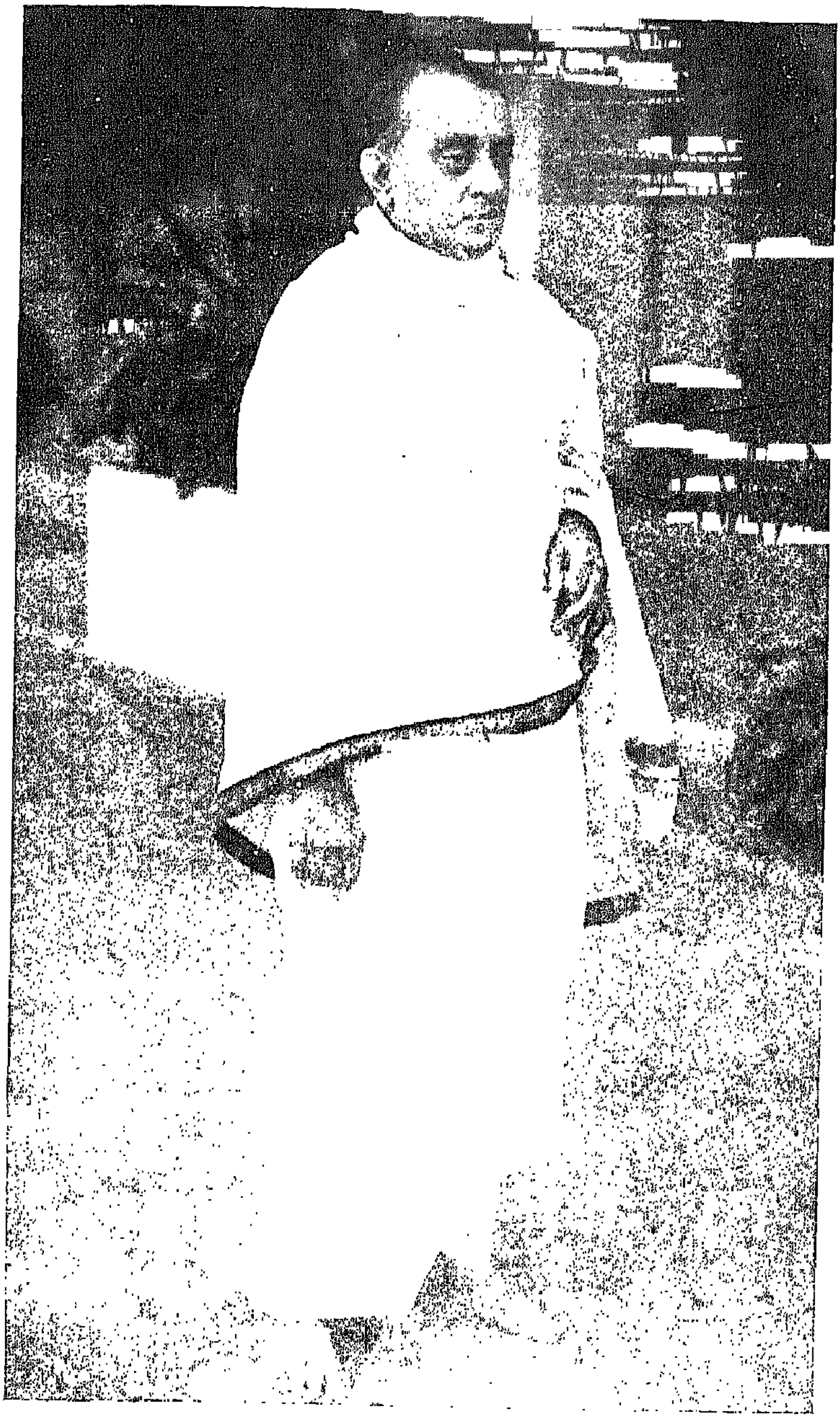
> "Where every prospect pleases
> And man alone is vile."

It has, however, purged itself of the blame and besides being a beauty-spot it has, if I may say so, become one vast temple itself. For beauty

is sickening if it is divorced from purity. True beauty should make one exclaim like Wordsworth:

> "There's not a nook within this solemn grove
> But were an apt confessional."

Let Travancore be such a solemn Temple of Beauty for all the people of Hindustan.



Sachivottama Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar

PART II

GANDHIJI'S WRITINGS AND SPEECHES

BEFORE THE PROCLAMATION

Speeches of 1925, '27, '34

VAIKAM

(March 1925)

[A TALK WITH THE SATYAGRAHIS]

The Satyagrahi's Duty

I am sorry that I shall be going away today without having a chat with you which I would regard as complete and satisfactory. But it seems it is not possible to do more. Those in charge of arrangements about my programme are of opinion that I ought to see, in order to help the cause, more places than Vaikam. I have yielded to their advice; but my own conviction based on past experience is that the success of the movement depends more on yourself than on outside support. If there is nothing in you, or if there is not much in you, any amount of enthusiasm brought about by a passing visit like mine will be of no avail. But if I had not come here and there had been no enthusiasm on the part of the public, and if you had been true to yourselves, there would have been nothing wanting. Your work would have commanded all the enthusiasm that might have been needed for a cause like this. Therefore if I could have passed here a longer time than I have, it would have been more profitable. However, that could not be done in face of the advice of friends who are guiding me.

Forget the Political Aspect

But I want to tell you as briefly as I can what I expect of you. I would ask you to forget

the political aspect of the programme. Political consequences of this struggle there are, but you are not to concern yourselves with them. If you do, you will miss the true result and also miss the political consequences, and when the real heat of the struggle is touched you will be found wanting. I am therefore anxious, even if it frightens you, to explain to you the true nature of the struggle. It is a struggle deeply religious for the Hindus. We are endeavouring to rid Hinduism of its greatest blot. The prejudice we have to fight against is an age-long prejudice. The struggle for the opening of the roads round the temple which we hold to be public to the unapproachables is *but a small skirmish in the big battle.* If our struggle was to end with the opening of the roads in Vaikam, you may be sure I would not have bothered my head about it. If, therefore, you think that the struggle is to end with opening of the roads in Vaikam to the unapproachables, you are mistaken. The roads must be opened. They have got to be opened. But that will be the beginning of the end. The end is to get all such roads throughout Travancore to be opened to the unapproachables; and not only that, but we expect that our efforts may result in amelioration of the general condition of the untouchables and unapproachables. That will require tremendous sacrifice.

Convince Opponents by Suffering

For our aim is not to do things by violence to opponents. That will be conversion by violence or

compulsion, *and if we import compulsion in matters of religion, there is no doubt that we shall be committing suicide.* We should carry on this struggle on the lines of strict non-violence, *i. e.* suffering in our own persons. That is the meaning of Satyagraha. The question is whether you are capable of every suffering that may be imposed upon you or may be your lot in the journey towards the goal. Even whilst you are suffering, you may have no bitterness—no trace of it—against your opponents. And I tell you it is not a mechanical act at all. On the contrary I want you to feel like loving your opponents, and the way to do it is to give them the same credit for honesty of purpose which you would claim for yourself. I know that it is a difficult task. I confess that it was a difficult task for me yesterday whilst I was talking to those friends who insisted on their right to exclude the unapproachables from the temple roads. I confess there was selfishness behind their talk. How then was I to credit them with honesty of purpose? I was thinking of this thing yesterday and also this morning, and this is what I did. I asked myself: 'Wherein was their selfishness or self-interest? It is true that they have their ends to serve. But so have we our ends to serve. Only we consider our ends to be pure and therefore selfless. But who is to determine where selflessness ends and selfishness begins? Selflessness may be the purest form of selfishness.' I do not say this for the sake of argument. But that is what I really feel. I am considering their condition of mind from their point of view and not my own.

Had they not been Hindus they would not have talked as they did yesterday. And immediately we begin to think of things as our opponents think of them we shall be able to do them full justice. I know that this requires a detached state of mind, and it is a state very difficult to reach. Nevertheless for a Satyagrahi it is absolutely essential. Three-fourths of the miseries and misunderstandings in the world will disappear, if we step into the shoes of our adversaries and understand their standpoint. We will then agree with our adversaries quickly or think of them charitably. In our case there is no question of our agreeing with them quickly as our ideals are radically different. But we may be charitable to them and believe that they actually mean what they say. They do not want to open the roads to the unapproachables. Now whether it is their self-interest or ignorance that tells them to say so, we really believe that it is wrong of them to say so. Our business therefore is to show them that they are in the wrong; and we should do so by *our* suffering. I have found that mere appeal to reason does not answer where prejudices are age-long and based on supposed religious authority. *Reason has to be strengthened by suffering, and suffering opens the eyes of understanding.* Therefore there must be no trace of compulsion in our acts. We must not be impatient, and we must have an undying faith in the means we are adopting. The means we are adopting just now are that we approach the four barricades and as we are stopped there, we sit down and spin away from day to day; and we must believe that

through it the roads must be opened. I know that it is a difficult and slow process. But if you believe in the efficacy of Satyagraha you will rejoice in this slow torture and suffering, and you will not feel the discomfort of your position as you go and sit in the boiling sun from day to day. If you have faith in the cause and the means and in God, the hot sun will be cool for you. You must not be tired and say 'how long', and never get irritated. That is only a small portion of your penance for the sin for which Hinduism is responsible.

Need for Discipline

I regard you as soldiers in this campaign. It is not possible for you to reason out things for yourselves. You have come to the Ashram because you have faith in the management. That does not mean faith in me. For I am not the manager. I am directing the movement so far as ideas and general direction are concerned. Your faith, therefore, must be in those who are managers for the time being. The choice before coming to the Ashram was yours. But having made your choice and come to the Ashram it is not for you to reason why. If we are to become a powerful nation, you must obey all directions that may be given to you from time to time. That is the only way in which either political or religious life can be built up. You must have determined for yourselves certain principles, and you must have joined the struggle in obedience to these principles. Those who remain in the Ashram are taking as much part in the struggle as those who go and

offer Satyagraha at the barricades. Every piece of work in connection with the struggle is just as important as any other piece, and therefore the work of sanitation in the Ashram is just as important as spinning away at the barricades. And if in this place the work of cleaning the closets and the compound is more distasteful than spinning, it should be considered far more important and profitable. Not a single minute should be wasted in idle conversation, but we must be absorbed in the work before us; and if every one of us works in that spirit you will see that there is pleasure in the work itself. Every bit of property, anything in the Ashram should be regarded by you as your own property and not property that can be wasted at pleasure. You may not waste a grain of rice or a scrap of paper, and similarly a minute of your time. It is not ours. It belongs to the nation and we are trustees for the use of it.

I know that all this will sound hard and difficult for you. My presentation may be hard, but it has not been possible for me to present the thing in any other way. For it will be wrong on my part if I deceive you or myself in believing that this is an easy thing.

Have a Spark of Sudhanva's Faith

Much corruption has crept into our religion. We have become lazy as a nation, we have lost the time sense. Selfishness dominates our action. There is mutual jealousy amongst the tallest of us. We are uncharitable to one another. And if I did not draw your attention to the things I have, it

would not be possible for us to rid ourselves of all these evils. Satyagraha is a relentless search for truth and a determination to reach truth. I can only hope you will realize the import of what you are doing. And if you do, your path will be easy — easy because you will take delight in difficulties and you will laugh in hope when everybody is in despair. I believe in the illustrations rishis or poets have given in religious books. *For example, I literally believe in the possibility of a Sudhanva smiling away whilst he was being drowned in the boiling oil. For to him it was greater torture to forget his Maker than to be in boiling oil.* And so it can be in a lesser measure here, if we have a spark of Sudhanva's faith in this struggle.

NAGERCOIL

(8–10–27)

A Hideous Doctrine

Whilst it gives me great pleasure to pay a second visit to this most beautiful part of India, I cannot conceal from you the deep grief I feel for the fact that in this fair land untouchability has a sway which it does not exercise in any other part of India. I feel deeply humiliated as a Hindu to find that it is in this enlightened Hindu State that untouchability appears in its most hideous form of unseeability and unapproachability. I speak with a due sense of my responsibility when I say that this untouchability is a curse that is eating into the vitals of Hinduism, and I often feel that unless we take due precautions and remove this curse from our midst, Hinduism itself is in danger of destruction. That in this age of reason, in this age of wide travel, in this age of a comparative study of religions, there should be found people, some of whom are educated, to uphold the hideous doctrine of treating a single human being as an untouchable, or unapproachable, or unseeable because of his birth, passes my comprehension. As a lay humble student of Hinduism and claiming to be one desirous of practising Hinduism in the spirit and to the letter let me tell you that I have found no warrant or support for this terrible doctrine. Let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that everything that is written in Sanskrit

and printed is shastra and has any binding effect upon us. That which is opposed to the fundamental maxims of morality, that which is opposed to trained reason, cannot be claimed as shastra, no matter how ancient it may be. There is enough warrant for the proposition that I have just stated in the Vedas, in the Mahabharata and in the Bhagavadgita. I therefore hope that it will be possible for the enlightened ruler of Travancore to blot the curse out of the land during her reign. And what can be nobler than that a woman should be able to say to herself and her people that during her rule it has been possible for these people who have been suffering from age-long slavery to receive their full freedom?

Wake Up Priests and Savarnas

But I know also her difficulties and those of her councillors. A Government, be it ever so autocratic, is always timid and cautious in moving in such reforms. A wise Government will welcome an agitation in connection with such reforms. An unwise Government, impatient of public opinion, will use violence in putting down such agitations. But from my personal experience of Vaikam Satyagraha I know that you have a Government which will not only tolerate but welcome agitation in order to strengthen its hands to achieve this reform. The real initiative, therefore, must lie with the people of Travancore, and that too not with the so-called untouchables, miscalled also 'Avarna' Hindus. To me the very word 'Avarna' Hindu is a misnomer and a reproach to Hinduism.

In many cases the remedy or the initiative lies not with them but with the so-called Savarna Hindus who have to rid themselves of the sin of untouchability. Let me tell you that it is not enough for you to hold the belief passively that untouchability is a crime. *He who is a passive spectator of crime is really, and in law, an active participator in it.* You must therefore begin and continue your agitation along all lawful and legitimate lines. Let me, if my voice will reach them, carry my voice to the Brahman priests who are opposing this belated reform. It is a painful fact, but it is a historical truth, that priests who should have been the real custodians of religion have been instrumental in destroying the religion of which they have been custodians. I see before my eyes the Brahman priests in Travancore and also elsewhere destroying the very religion of which they are supposed to be custodians, from their ignorance or worse. All their learning, when it is utilised in order to sustain a hideous superstition, a terrible wrong, turns to dust. I wish, therefore, that they will recognise before it is too late the signs of the times and march with the events which are taking them and us voluntarily or involuntarily along the path of truth. *All the religions of the world, while they may differ in other respects, unitedly proclaim that nothing lives in this world but truth.*

The Path of the Reformer

Let me also warn the impatient reformer that unless he keeps himself on the right, straight and narrow path, he will hurt himself and hinder the

reform about which he is rightly impatient. I venture to claim that I have placed in the hands of the reformer a matchless and priceless weapon in the form of Satyagraha. But then the conditions of successful Satyagraha are fairly hard. If he has faith in God, faith in himself, faith in his cause, he will never be violent, nor even against his most fierce opponent whom he would accuse rightly of injustice, ignorance and even violence. I state without fear of contradiction that truth has never been vindicated by violence. A Satyagrahi therefore expects to conquer his opponents or his so-called enemies not by violent force but by force of love, by process of conversion. His methods will be always gentle and gentlemanly. He will never exaggerate. And since non-violence is otherwise known as love it has no weapon but that of self-suffering. And above all in a movement like that of the removal of untouchability, which in my opinion is essentially religious and one of self-purification, there *is no room for hate, no room for haste, no room for thoughtlessness, and no room for exaggeration.* Since Satyagraha is one of the most powerful methods of direct action, a Satyagrahi exhausts all other means before he resorts to Satyagraha. He will therefore constantly and continully approach the constituted authority, he will appeal to public opinion, educate public opinion, state his case calmly and coolly before everybody who wants to listen to him, and only after he has exhausted all these avenues will he resort to Satyagraha. But when he has found the impelling call of the inner voice within him and launches out

upon Saytagraha he has burnt his boats and there is no receding. Let me, however, hope that it will not be necessary in this land for people to undergo all the suffering for removing a wrong which is so patent.

TRIVANDRUM

(9-10-27)

Hinduism and Untouchability

As at Nagercoil, here too the best part of the day has been devoted to discussing this problem. Though it was partly a social call that I paid to the Dewan we naturally began to discuss this thorny question. And if you found me coming to the meeting a few minutes late, it was because I had gone to pay my respects to Her Highness the Maharani Regent, and I found myself again discussing this very question with her. I have always, after having paid the first visit to Travancore, looked forward to a series of visits to this enchanting land. Its most beautiful scenery, the location of Kanyakumari in Travancore, and the simplicity and freedom of the women of Travancore captivated me when I first came here. But the pleasure that all these thoughts and associations always gave me has been seriously marred by the thought that untouchability had assumed its most terrible shape in Travancore, and it has pained me to think that this evil has existed in that terrible form in a most ancient Hindu State, which has the privilege of occupying the first place in all India in educational progress. And this existence of untouchability in its extreme form has always caused me so much pain, because I consider myself to be a Hindu of Hindus staturated with the spirit of Hinduism. I have failed to find a single warrant

for the existence of untouchability as we believe and practise it today in all those books which we call as Hindu shastras. But as I have repeatedly said in other places, if I found that Hinduism really countenanced untouchability I should have no hesitation in renouncing Hinduism itself. For I hold that religion, to be worthy of the name, must not be inconsistent with the fundamental truths of ethics and morality. But as I believe that untouchability is no part of Hinduism, I cling to Hinduism, but daily become more and more impatient of this hideous wrong. So, when I found that this question was agitating Travancore, I had no hesitation in plunging myself into it. If I have taken up this question, I have done so not in any way to embarrass the State. For I believe that Her Highness the Maharani Regent is solicitous about the welfare of her people. She also claims to be a reformer along these lines, and I fancy that I commit no breach of confidence when I tell you that she is eager to see that this wrong is removed at the earliest possible moment.

Duty of State and People

But then Governments cannot afford to lead in matters of reform. By their very nature Governments are but interpreters and executors of the expressed will of the people whom they govern, and even a most autocratic Government will find itself unable to impose a reform which its people cannot assimilate. So, if I was a subject of Travancore State, I should be entirely satisfied to know that my Government was willing to carry

forward this reform as speedily as the people were willing to assimilate it. But having satisfied myself of that one thing, *I should not rest content for one single moment till I had carried the message of reform from mouth to mouth and village to village.* Well-ordered, persistent agitation is the soul of healthy progress, and so if I were you, I would not let the Government rest till this reform was carried through. Not allowing the Government to rest does not by any means mean embarrassing the Government. A wise Government welcomes and needs the support and warmth and encouragement of such an agitation in order to achieve a reform which the Government itself wants. I know that when I was here last, I was told that the Savarna (Caste) Hindus were all most anxious for this reform of the abolition of untouchability in every shape and form. But I am afraid that the Savarna Hindus have slept over their wish. They have not given a concrete form to their wish, and I believe that it is the bounden duty of every Hindu in the State to wake up to a sense of his duty and to wake up his lethargic brethren also to a sense of their duty. And I have not a shadow of doubt that if the Savarna Hindus could with one voice express their wish, this monster of untouchability would go. It would be wrong, therefore, to ascribe our own lethargy and slothfulness to the Government.

The Secret of Satyagraha

But reformers in every community and every country are to be counted on one's finger-tips;

and I know that the brunt of all such reform falls upon the devoted heads of that small band of reformers. What are the reformers then to do in the face of this evil of such long standing, is really the question one has to solve. The reformers all over the world have resorted to one or the other of the two methods that I am about to mention. The vast majority of them have drawn attention to evils by creating wild agitation and resorting to violence. They have resorted to agitation that embarrasses the Government, that embarrasses the people, and that disturbs the even tenor of the life of the citizens. The other school of reformers, which I would call the non-violent school, resorts to agitation of the gentle type. It disdains to draw attention by doing violence in thought, word or deed; but it draws attention by simple self-suffering. It never exaggerates. It never departs by a hair's breadth from truth, and whilst impatient of evil does not mean ill even to the evil-doer. I have given that a short name and I have placed it before this country as before South Africa in the name of Satyagraha. Do not for one moment mix up Satyagraha with civil disobedience. *Civil disobedience is no doubt a branch of Satyagraha. It comes not at the beginning but at the fag end. It presupposes immense discipline. It presupposes great self-restraint. It is based upon charity, and it never puts an unfavourable or unwarranted construction even upon the motives of its opponents.* For it seeks not to coerce but to convert. You may, therefore, imagine my painful surprise when I found the whole of my doctrine

and my remarks grossly misinterpreted by a friend who visited me in Virudhunagar. I saw in the Trivandrum Express a report given by him of what had occurred between him and myself. It was a distortion from start to finish of the conversation that I had with him (A voice: "Shame"). But there is no warrant for crying "shame". The gentleman who cried shame evidently does not know the virtue or meaning of charity. For I do not for one moment suggest that the friend who saw me has consciously or deliberately distorted my meaning. I am prepared to believe the explanation that he gave me this morning. But I have drawn your attention to this prominently in order to illustrate what I mean by Satyagraha, and also to show you the danger of those who do not know this fine weapon trifling with it. I am simply giving this example in order to warn the would-be reformer against undertaking this method unless he is absolutely sure of his ground and unless he has got more than the ordinary measure of self-control. And seeing that I am enamoured of this method of Satyagraha, which I consider to be a matchless weapon, I do not want it to be misused or abused, so long as I can prevent it. I therefore advised this friend to keep out of this problem until he had understood what Satyagraha really was, and unless he had assimilated the true spirit of it.

But this again is not intended to damp the zeal of even a single reformer. I am going into the problem so much in detail, for the simple reason that I want you to work at it in order to get the quickest possible solution. I want, therefore,

humbly to suggest that *those of you who have had some experience of public life should take up this movement and make it their own and harness the energy and the will of the youths who are interested in this problem but do not know how to solve it.* And I suggest also that you place yourselves in touch with the authorities and day after day worry the life out of them until this reform is achieved. For I am free to tell you that not only is Her Highness desirous of carrying out this reform but so is the Dewan himself. But, belonging as he does to a different faith, you and I Hindus can appreciate his limitation. In my opinion, so far as the Government is concerned, it is on the side of reform; only the initiative will have to come from you and not from the Government. You will forgive me for having dealt with this very important question in a highly technical manner. I could not do otherwise as I have no other time at my disposal so that I could have convened a few of the leaders at a conference and discussed the pros and cons. I felt therefore that you would overlook the heaviness of my speech in connection with untouchability before a big audience as this.

Varna and Ashrama

One question was put to me arising out of this question this morning, and that was what was the bearing of *Varnashrama Dharma* upon untouchability. That means that I should say a few words about my conception of *Varnashrama Dharma*. So far as I know anything at all of

Hinduism, the meaning of *varna* is incredibly simple. It simply means the following on the part of us all the hereditary and traditional calling of our forefathers, in so far as that traditional calling is not inconsistent with fundamental ethics, and this only for the purpose of earning one's livelihood. I regard this as the law of our being, if we would accept the definition of man given in all religions. Of all the animal creation of God, man is the only animal who has been created in order that he may know his Maker. Man's aim in life is not, therefore, to add from day to day to his material prospects and to his material possessions, but his predominant calling is from day to day to come nearer his own Maker, and from this definition it was that the rishis of old discovered this law of our being. You will realise that if all of us follow this law of *varna* we would limit our material ambition, and our energy would be set free for exploring those vast fields whereby and wherethrough we can know God. You will at once then see that nine-tenths of the activities that are today going on throughout the world and which are engrossing our attention would fall into disuse. You will then be entitled to say that *varna* as we observe it today is a travesty of the *varna* that I have described to you. And so it undoubtedly is, but just as we do not hate truth because untruth parades itself as truth, but we sift untruth from truth and cling to the latter, so also we can destroy the distortion that passes as *varna*, and purify the state to which the Hindu society has been reduced today.

Ashrama is a necessary corollary to what I have stated to you, and if *varna* today has become distorted, *ashrama* has altogether disappeared. *Ashrama* means the four stages in one's life, and I wish the students who have kindly presented their purses to me — the Arts and Science students and the Law College students — were able to assure me that they were living according to the laws of the first *ashrama*, and that they were *brahmacharis* in thought, word and deed. The *Brahmacharya Ashrama* enjoins that only those who live the life of a *brahmachari*, at least up to 25 years, are entitled to enter upon the second *Ashrama*, i. e. *Grihasthashrama* (Householder's Life). And because the whole conception of Hindusim is to make man better than he is and draw him nearer to his Maker, the rishis set a limit even to the *Grihasthashrama* stage and imposed on us the obligation of *Vanaprastha* and *Sannyasa*. But today you will vainly search throughout the length and breadth of India for a true *brahmachari*, for a true *grihastha*, not to talk of a *vanaprastha* and *sannyasi*. We may, in our elongated wisdom, laugh at this scheme of life, if we wish to. But I have no doubt whatsoever that this is the secret of the great success of Hinduism. The Hindu civilization has survived the Egyptian, the Assyrian and the Babylonian. The Christian is but two thousand years old. The Islamic is but of yesterday. Great as both these are, they are still in my humble opinion in the making. Christian Europe is not at all Christian, but is groping, and so in my opinion is Islam still groping for its great secret, and there

is today a competition, healthy as also extremely unhealthy and ugly, between these three great religions. As years go by, the conviction is daily growing upon me that *varna* is the law of man's being and, therefore, as necessary for Christianity and Islam, as it has been necessary for Hinduism and has been its saving. I refuse, therefore, to believe that *varnashrama* has been the curse of Hinduism, as it is the fashion nowadays in the south on the part of some Hindus to say. But that does not mean that you and I may tolerate for one moment or be gentle towards the hideous travesty of *varnashrama* that we see about us today. There is nothing in common between *varna* and caste. Caste, if you will, is undoubtedly a drag upon Hindu progress, and untouchability is, as I have already called it or described it, an excrescence upon *varnashrama*. It is a weedy growth fit only to be weeded out, as we remove the weeds that we see growing in wheat fields or rice fields. In this conception of *varna*, there is absolutely no idea of superiority and inferiority. If I again interpret the Hindu spirit rightly, all life is absolutely equal and one. It is therefore an arrogant assumption on the part of the Brahman when he says, 'I am superior to the other three *varnas*.' That is not what the Brahmans of old said. They commanded homage not because they claimed superiority, but because they claimed the right of service through and through without the slightest expectation of a reward. The priests, who today arrogate to themselves the function of the Brahman and distort religion, are no custodians

of Hinduism or Brahmanism. Consciously or unconsciously they are laying the axe at the root of the very tree on which they are sitting, and when they tell you that shastras enjoin untouchability and when they talk of distance pollution, I have no hesitation in saying that they are belying their creed and that they are misinterpreting the spirit of Hinduism. You will now perhaps understand why it is absolutely necessary for you Hindus who are here and listening to me to energise yourselves and rid yourselves of this curse. You should take pride in leading the way of reform, belonging as you do to an ancient Hindu State. So far as I can read the atmosphere around you here, the moment is certainly propitious for you if you will sincerely and energetically undertake this reform.

QUILON

(11-10-27)

["Untouchability poisons Hinduism as a drop of arsenic poisons milk," said Gandhiji at Quilon, and made an impassioned appeal to the Caste Hindus to destroy the poison.]

Knowing the quality of milk and the use of milk, and knowing the quality of arsenic, we should be impatient with the man sitting near a pitcher of milk and trying to remove arsenic grain by grain, and we should throw the whole pitcher overboard. *Even so do I as a Hindu feel that the curse of untouchability is rendering the milk of Hinduism altogether poisoned and impure.* I feel therefore that patience in a matter of this character is not a virtue. It is impossible to restrain ourselves. Patience with evil is really trifling with evil and with ourselves. I have therefore not hesitated to say that the State of Travancore should lead in the matter of the reform and blot out the evil at a single stroke. But I know also that it was not possible even for a Hindu State to do away with this evil, unless it was backed, and actively backed, by its Hindu population. And so my appeal must be mostly to you rather than to the head of the State, and to every Hindu in this meeting I wish to make a definite personal appeal. You and I have long neglected our duty to the so-called untouchables and unapproachables, and to this extent you and I have been false representatives

of Hinduism. I ask you without the slightest hesitation summarily to reject the advance of every person who comes to you in defence of untouchability. Remember that in this age whatever one man or group of men and women do does not remain secret for any length of time, and we are daily being weighed and found wanting so long as we nurse untouchability in our bosom. You must remember that all the great religions of the world are at the present time in the melting pot. Let us not ostrich-like hide our heads and ignore the danger that lies at the back of us. I have not a shadow of doubt that in the great turmoil now taking place either untouchability has to die or Hinduism has to disappear. But I do know that Hinduism is not dying, is not going to die, because I see untouchability is a corpse struggling with its last breath to hold on for a little while.

PALLURUTHI

(18-1-34)

TO HARIJAN SCEPTICS

[The following is the full text of Gandhiji's speech delivered at Palluruthi in reply to an address presented by the members of Shri Dharma Paripalana Yogam.]

Purification Only Motive

I am thankful to the organisers for having taken me through the school building and the temple. I am thankful also for the frankness with which your opinion is expressed in this address. I am glad that this address is really more in the nature of advice to me than anything else. The best way to reciprocate is to tell you frankly what views I hold. You have advised me not to conduct this campaign in the name of Hindu religion. I am very sorry I cannot endorse your advice. *It is wholly wrong to say or even think that this movement is conducted in order to consolidate Hindu religion or consolidate anything.* If I commit sin and want to do penance, I do it not to consolidate myself but to purify myself. For me, this untouchability is a sin that Hinduism commits against the untouchables. It becomes and remains a sin inasmuch as the Savarna Hindus consider the untouchables, whom I now call Harijans, as untouchable Hindus. Therefore I can only call this a movement of reformation and purification in Hinduism. I become a debtor only to those who

call themselves Hindus. I do not become a debtor to those who have nothing to do with Hinduism. You just now took me to the temple and there showed me everything including the worship that is done according to the Hindu traditions. If your form of worship is the same as mine, my heart naturally goes out to you. But if you say you are no longer Hindus and you have adopted some other faith, my obligation to you as Hindus ceases. My obligation to you as fellow-beings, of course, does not cease.

There is that fine and necessary distinction which you cannot get over. God has made Nature so that we are one in many. There are different faiths in this world. I believe them all to be true. But so long as there are different faiths and we belong to one faith, there are special obligations attached to that faith. That does not mean that I would not work for Mussalman fellow-men or Christian fellow-men or Parsis or Jews or any other. But I can realise unity with no one, if I lose my foot-hold from the platform on which I am standing. I believe in God much more than I believe in the fact that you and I are alive and that I am speaking to you. I may give you an illustration of what I mean. In appearance, I am speaking to you and you are listening to me. In reality, your hearts and minds may be somewhere else. My heart also may be somewhere else and my mind may be in something else. Then my speaking or your listening would be a deception. Therefore my speaking and your listening, though they are

an appearance, may not be a reality. But my heart, word and deed are pledged to the Being called God, Allah, Rama or Krishna. You will now easily recognise that it is true when I say that my belief in God is far more a reality to me than this meeting which I am addressing.

Anti-humbug

But I must not take you into deeper waters. The sum and substance of what I say is this. If I appear to you as a Hindu, I do so in order to discharge an obligation I owe to you. I am supposed to have been born in a Savarna family. *As a Savarna Hindu, when I see that there are some Hindus called Avarnas, it offends my sense of justice and truth, and it cuts me to the quick.* It is an abhorrent thought to me that in the faith in which I was born and nurtured there should be a single human being considered lower than myself. Therefore I have become an untouchable by choice, and if I discover that Hindu shastras really countenance untouchability as it is seen today, I will renounce and denounce Hinduism. As a student of Hindu religion and of comparative religion, I see no such warrant in Hindu shastras. But Hindus today practise untouchability. Therefore it becomes my duty to warn them against that evil. If, however, you embrace any other faith or have no faith whatsoever, I can have no appeal for you. You cease to be untouchable Hindus. If you want to cut adrift from Hinduism, you are absolutely free to do so. I cannot hold you to Hinduism by force. I can only hold you by the force of love.

I may so endear myself to you by my service that you may feel that although you have been classed as untouchables by certain Hindus, there is no untouchability in Hinduism. It may be in God's dispensation that I have come to you too late. But God will not punish me for that, because He knows that for the last fifty years I have rebelled against untouchability. Now, I think, you fairly understand what I stand for. The movement is not anti-Mussalman, anti-Christian, or anti-Jew. *It is anti-humbug. That is what I stand for.*

Harijan — An Unoffending Name

A concluding remark as to the use of the word 'Harijan'. It is not a word of my coinage. It was suggested by an untouchable. Untouchability is a hateful and detestable thing; but, so long as one has to talk of those who are considered today untouchables, it is surely better to use an unoffending name than an offending one. I give you an illustration from life. In South Africa, Indians were not called Indians but coolies. I was called not an Indian lawyer but a coolie lawyer. To the Whites, the words 'coolie' and 'Indian' were synonymous. I protested against the word coolie, just as this untouchable brother protested against the word untouchable, and I suggested that the word Indian should be used to designate the inhabitants of India. So long as men were known by their countries, some name was necessary to signify the inhabitants of India. 'Indians' was an unoffending designation. Precisely in the same manner the word 'Harijan' is used.

Lifting Those Who Are in Mire

Lastly, let me in all humility tell you that I have not come to help those who feel their strength. I know that no word of offence which you use against the Savarna Hindus will be too strong. I know also that, if your resentment expresses itself in acts, Savarna Hindus will deserve those acts. But I know infinitely more than you do what Harijans are, where they live, what their number is, and to what condition they have been reduced. You can speak of this place, possibly of the whole of Cochin, possibly of Cochin and Travancore, still more possibly of Malabar. But I claim to be able to speak of Harijans from the North, the South, the East and the West of India, and I know their abject position. My only business is, if it is at all possible, to lift those who are in the mire. I want to do it because I want to lift myself. With their abjectness I feel myself also abject. I know that, if Hindus were freed from the coil of untouchability, you would find that all the corroding distinctions, not between Hindus and Hindus only but also between Hindus and non-Hindus, will disappear as if by a magic touch. I have delivered during the brief period at my disposal the whole of my message. The choice is entirely yours. You may accept this reparation or it is perfectly open to you to reject it.

If you still fail to understand me, I can only pray in the lines of a celebrated English hymn:

> "We shall know each other better
> When the mists have rolled away."

ALLEPPEY

(18-1-34)

[The following is the full text of Gandhiji's speech at Alleppey delivered during the Harijan Tour.]

Is Religion an Obstacle ?

Instead of dealing with the several addresses presented here, I deal with the addresses or letters not presented here but showered on me from outside this audience. I hold two letters in my hand. One is a printed letter written from Shertalai; the other, a typewritten one, from Alleppey. Now this is how the printed letter starts: "We beg to state that your present attempt to strengthen the Hindu religion by removing the evil of untouchability will end in utter failure." Then follows the advice after this introduction. The second letter has this: "You are well aware of the fact that the greatest obstacle in the way of the creation of a united Indian nation is religion." I am not a stranger to this kind of advice. I had had letters from Travancore and Cochin even when I was in Poona, ailing. They were all nicely and courteously worded, but strong in their emphasis on their belief that religion was the greatest obstacle in the way of the country's progress. Ever since I have set foot on the Cochin-Travancore soil, I have been flooded with communications of this sort. I cannot possibly disregard all these letters. I know that for this belief, which is

evidently growing upon some young men in Cochin and Travancore, the Savarna Hindus are primarily responsible. They have dignified irreligion in the name of religion. They have defended sin as if it was virtue with divine sanction. These young men have felt, in their impatience, that, if religion is as Savarna Hindus describe it to be and practise it, religion is an evil. Having become impatient and angered, they have not stopped to think out the question and condemned religion wholesale. If I have real religion in me, I have got to be patient and gentle to these brethren of mine. I have reasoned with them by correspondence, and reasoned with them today at Palluruthi.

Cultivate Faith in God and Religion

I must tell these friends that *my present attempt has nothing to do with the strengthening of Hinduism.* I ask you to take me at my word when I say that I am wholly indifferent whether Hindu religion is strengthened or weakened or perishes; that is to say, I have so much faith in the correctness of the position I have taken up that, if my taking up that position results in weakening Hinduism, I cannot help it and I must not care. I tell you what I want to do with Hindu religion. I want to purify it of the sin of untouchability. I want to exorcise the devil of untouchability which has today distorted and disfigured Hinduism out of all recognition. I know that, if this evil can be removed root and branch, those very friends who say religion is the greatest

obstacle to the progress of India will immediately change their minds. But if it is any consolation to these friends, I tell them that, if I came to the conclusion that Hinduism sanctioned untouchability, I should denounce it. But even then I would not go so far with them as to say that religion itself is useless and that God is not God but devil. For me the result will be that I shall lose faith in Hindus and Hinduism, but my faith in God will be strengthened. And I want to tell you why it will be strengthened. Faith is not a delicate flower which would wither under the slightest stormy weather. Faith is like the Himalaya mountains which cannot possibly change. No storm can possibly remove the Himalaya mountains from their foundations. I am daily praying for strength from God to be able to say to God, when Hindus disappoint me, 'Although Thy own creation has disappointed me, I still cling to Thee as a babe clings to the mother's breast.' And I want every one of you to cultivate that faith in God and religion. It is my conviction that all the great faiths of the world are true, are God-ordained, and that they serve the purpose of God and of those who have been brought up in those surroundings and those faiths. I do not believe that the time will ever come when we shall be able to say there is only one religion in the world. In a sense, even today there is one fundamental religion in the world. But there is no such thing as a straight line in Nature. Religion is one tree with many branches. As branches you may say religions are many; as tree Religion is one.

Abolition Will Knit All Together

What is at the bottom of this movement for purification in Hinduism? It is not designed as a movement hostile to any religion. It is designed to bring all faiths nearer together. Do you for one moment suppose that, if Savarna Hindus make reparation in the terms that I have suggested and if they forget the distinctions of high and low, they will forget those distinctions only in regard to Harijans and not in regard to others? Today this position of untouchability has overtaken the whole of Indian society. Harijans are not the only untouchables. They are on the extreme fringe. But all Hindus are untouchable to themselves, and all Hindus to non-Hindus. Non-Hindus have noted this fact; and *I suggest to you that our differences and quarrels today have their main root in this canker of untouchability.* I ask you to believe me implicitly when I say that, if untouchability is removed, it must result in bringing all Indians together and, if I may say in all humility, all humanity nearer. It is not a small movement, but a big movement fraught with great consequences. Can you imagine that, if it were otherwise, as a wise man, which I consider myself to be, I would ceaselessly wander from place to place in the evening of my life to deliver a message which has the consequences of strengthening Hindus for fighting against Mussalmans, Christians, Jews and Parsis, among whom I have friends as dear as blood brothers? I have that implicit faith in my mission that, if it succeeds — as it will succeed, it is bound to succeed — *history will record it as a*

movement designed to knit all people in the world together, not as hostile to one another but as parts of one whole.

I think I have given sufficient answer to those who have sent me these letters.

TRIVANDRUM

(22-1-34)

[The following are extracts from the speech delivered by Gandhiji at a very largely attended public meeting in Trivandrum.]

What It Means to Be a Veta

I am no stranger to Travancore or Trivandrum. If you will permit me, I should say I am with you a fellow citizen of Travancore. And I shall tell you why I would love to become a citizen of Travancore. I have had the audacity, if you like to call it, or courage, as I would call it, to say that Malabar, which includes Travancore and Cochin, was the blackest spot in the untouchability map of India. The worst forms of untouchability are to be found in Malabar. And Malabar is the home of Shankaracharya, the teacher of the *advaita* doctrine. How untouchability of the worst type can be consistent with the teaching of Shankara passes my comprehension. But, since I have become a Harijan by choice, I should love to suffer with the Harijans who are supposed to occupy the lowest rung of the ladder even in the Harijan scale. I cannot possibly do so unless I can take out a naturalization certificate and become a citizen of Travancore. For, do you know what I saw this morning when I went to a Harijan school? There I saw two Harijan boys, belonging to what are called the Veta class. One lives and learns on this earth. I learnt then and

there that Vetas are invisible like the Nayadis — synonymous terms. In the note that was passed to me, it was stated that Vetas had the greatest difficulty in finding pure drinking water. Once during the Boer War, as a humble member of the Ambulance Corps that I was, I found myself in the position of the Vetas. Not that there was any prohibition against the soldiers and ambulance men who were marching through that scorching country, but it happened to be a waterless desert; it was a decree of prohibition from Providence itself. The mid-day sun shone scorching overhead. We were all white soldiers and brown ambulance men parched with thirst. Suddenly we came upon a little pool filled with dirty water. That was to serve as drinking water for us. This morning I immediately recalled that scene and said to myself how infinitely worse the Vetas must feel when day in and day out they are consigned to dirty pools for drinking water, not in a waterless desert, but in a place where ample fresh water is perennial. Are you now surprised that I should love to identify myself with a Veta and feel with him by living with him and seeing what you feel when you see fresh water all around and are debarred from using it? If God wills it, He will give me the strength and the will to go through the fire. You now understand the nature of the message that I want to deliver to you this evening.

Abolish State Recognition

But there is always a ray of light even through apparently impenetrable darkness. The

communique of the Maharajah's Government in connection with this untouchability business was this morning placed in my hands. I was able, at the meeting where I saw the order of His Highness the Maharajah's Government, to tender my congratulations. As I then read this order, it seemed to me in short that there would be no State recognition for those public institutions which debarred untouchables from their use. Whilst it was possible for me to tender my congratulations, you must not run away with the belief that such relief of a very modified type can give me satisfaction. This deep-seated disease requires not a temporizing but a drastic remedy. If the Hindu patient is to live, then this disease has to be removed root and branch. I wish that the young Maharajah and his advisers may take courage into their hands and apply the only remedy that can undo this mischief. The remedy is incredibly simple. They have simply to say that there will be no State recognition in any shape or form of untouchability, unapproachability or invisibility. As an ex-lawyer, who still has some memory of legal lore, I make bold to say that such a legislation or such a proclamation will not amount to any interference with any single individual's religious belief or practice. It is the bounden duty of a State which has subjects entertaining different faiths to take an impartial and detached view in matters of religion. *By identifying itself with practices prevalent among a section of its subjects and by giving legal protection to those practices, the State interferes with the progress of reform and interferes with the free*

play of people's conscience. All that the State has got to do is to say to its subjects, "The State has nothing to do with your religious beliefs and practices. We will interfere when you, in prosecuting your religious practices, will interfere with common law rights or with the peace of the State." But the existing State recognition of untouchability makes it a current coin.

I feel that an extremely heavy responsibility rests upon Hindu princes when, as I feel, the very Hindu religion runs the risk of being utterly destroyed if this virus of untouchability is not expelled from the Hindu body. Those who feel as deeply as I do about this matter cannot possibly rest until the so-called Harijans are clothed with precisely the same rights as non-Harijan Hindus possess today.

'My One Constant Prayer'

Now one or two words only with reference to the individual duty of everyone in this audience, man or woman. This is a movement essentially of self-purification, of Savarna Hindus frankly acknowledging the debt that they owe to Harijans, and rendering full reparation to them. This can only be brought about by a complete change of heart on our part. As I have already described to you, the State aid can only be of a negative character. The State cannot possibly change the individual heart. That can only be made by prayer to the Almighty. It is not possible for a single human being to change the heart of a fellow being. I know that I cannot do it. I can only

make an appeal to your reason and to your heart. But it is God alone who can arm the word that I speak to you with the power to shoot like an arrow and make a lodgment in your heart. *If you can believe the word of a man who is perpetually seeking after truth, believe me that throughout all my waking hours and, if I can say so, during my sleep also, my one constant prayer to God is that He may give that power to my words, so that the Hindu heart can be touched and it may be purged of the virus of untouchability and Hindus and Hinduism may be saved from the impending doom.*

Please remember that your duty and my duty does not end with merely recognizing the Harijans as blood brothers and blood sisters. That is the beginning of the end. The end is that we should rid ourselves of every form of untouchability that is eating into the vitals of Hindu society. As an address reminded me only this morning, it was not enough to treat Pulayas, Nayadis and others as blood brothers; for, untouchability existed among Savarna Hindus themselves, caste against caste. It is true that the poison has gone so deep that it has corrupted the whole of society. It has even affected our fellow-countrymen—Mussalmans, Christians and others. What, therefore, you and I have to do is to forget that there is anybody high or low on this earth; that, being the children of the same Creator, the same God, no matter to what faith we may belong, no matter what hue we may have, we are all equal in the eyes of our Maker. Do you not see that when we have been able to purge ourselves of this

virus, not only shall we, Hindus, be able to look the world in the face, but we shall also be able to live in peace with our neighbours, be they Mussalmans, be they Christians, Jews, Parsis or others?

GANDHIJI'S ARTICLES ON THE PROCLAMATION

AN EXAMPLE FOR HINDU PRINCES AND THEIR ADVISERS

(21-11-36)

The Travancore Durbar have earned the congratulations of the whole Hindu world, and all thoughtful men, by issuing the following Proclamation:

"Profoundly convinced of the truth and validity of our religion, believing that it is based on divine guidance and on all-comprehending toleration, knowing that in its practice it has throughout the centuries adapted itself to the need of the changing times, solicitous that none of our Hindu subjects should, by reason of birth, caste or community, be denied the consolation and solace of the Hindu faith, we have decided and hereby declare, ordain and command that, subject to such rules and conditions as may be laid down and imposed by us for preserving their proper atmosphere and maintaining their rituals and observances, there should henceforth be no restriction placed on any Hindu by birth or religion on entering or worshipping at temples controlled by us and our Government."

The action has been long overdue. But better late than never. It may be said without pride that the way for the great step was prepared by the gentle but persistent effort of the Travancore branch of the Harijan Sevak Sangh headed by Shri C. K. Parameswaran Pillai. The workers of the Sangh had awakened the conscience of the Savarna Hindus who had sent numerous petitions to the Durbar praying for the opening of the State temples to Harijans on the same terms as they were to Caste

Hindus. Untouchability, though an excrescence, has taken such hold of the Hindu world that whenever a Hindu breaks through it and declares against it, he excites admiration among reformers and becomes the object of fierce criticism from the orthodox. This is much more so when the action is taken by one in high authority as H. H. the Maharajah of Travancore, an ancient orthodox Hindu State. Let us hope all criticism will be hushed before this well thought out, deliberate act of piety and justice.

Let us hope, too, that no attempt will be made to whittle away the hard-earned freedom of Harijans by hedging it round by any the least distinction between one Hindu and another. If the Proclamation means anything it means that in the temples conducted under the State aegis Harijans will offer worship precisely on the same terms as the highest Caste Hindu so called. In other words, in the house of God in Travancore henceforth there will be no distinction between man and man, there will be no Harijan and no high caste, all will be Harijans—children of God. If these are not the implications of the great Proclamation, it is nothing but a mere scrap of paper. But we have no reason to doubt its sincerity or suspect any mental reservations.

Travancore has a large and important Christian community. Christian missions are flirting with Harijans, rightly no doubt from their own standpoint; they are spending money on them and holding out hope of real freedom and equality of social status. It is beside the present discussion that for Harijans there is no social equality, no real freedom, anywhere except when it is first

obtained in Hinduism. I am not thinking of individuals. I am thinking of the whole mass. The latter are so intertwined with the other Hindus that unless they become brothers with them instead of remaining serfs which they are, no change of lable can avail anything. But this apart, let us realize that the working of the Proclamation will be narrowly watched and criticized by the sister communities. It therefore behoves the State authorities as well as the Caste Hindus to give full effect to the letter and the spirit of the Proclamation.

The main duty of working the Proclamation, however, devolves in a way upon the reformers and Harijans. They should avail themselves of the freedom in a religious, becoming and humble spirit. Reformers should see to it that Harijans enter these temples after proper ablutions and in a clean condition. I know that this primary rule is observed more in the breach than in the performance by the vast majority of temple-going Caste Hindus. Harijans may not copy the bad manners of Caste Hindus. They should take pride in setting a good example in cleanliness both of body and heart.

The Proclamation should have no political significance, as it has none. I regard it as the performance of a purely religious duty of the State. And it should be so taken and so treated by all the Hindus of the State. To give it any other colour will be to destroy its great spiritual purpose and effect.

Let us hope that the example of Travancore will prove infectious and all the other Hindu States

will follow suit. There is no reason why they should not. It is the privilege and duty of a Hindu prince to propound religious codes which are not inconsistent with the fundamental principles of Hinduism as derived from the Vedas and which are demanded by the spirit of the times. This must be true of all the progressive and living religions. This rule accounts for apparent inconsistencies of the different Smritis and also obvious departures from the original tenets, as even a careless student will detect even in the same Smriti. If the Hindu princes do not perform this primary function, it is not so much their fault as of the lost Brahmanhood. If the Brahmanical spirit was restored, princes would be rishis, who would take from the revenues the honest minimum necessary to support them as a commission for their labours on behalf of the ryots, and hold their revenues in trust for the ryots. They would not have private property as they possess today and feel independent of their ryots and their wishes.

But whether we reach the ideal State outlined here during the present generation or ever, surely there is nothing to prevent the Hindu princes from following the example set by Travancore, and thus hastening the day of the total removal of untouchability from Hinduism, and helping to save it from certain destruction. I would advise the responsible Hindus in every Hindu State to approach their princes and their advisers to initiate the overdue reform.

GOD IS GREAT

(12-12-36)

The following telegram was received at Poona from the Harijan Sevak Sangh, Trivandrum, on the 3rd instant:

" Actual working (of the) Proclamation most successful. (It) has disproved all fears entertained (in) certain quarters. No part of (the) temple open to any devotee is barred against Ezhavas and Harijans now. Excepting (the) innermost chamber which has been always used only by (the) officiating priest, all other places including *mandaps*, enclosured platforms (and) corridors are as freely used by newly admitted devotees as by Caste Hindus. What is of the greatest importance is that waters in sacred tanks attached to temples are also freely used now by Ezhavas and Harijans. (The) sense of horror at (the) approach of Harijans seems completely overcome. Harijan devotees do not seem to excite any special reaction in devotees of other castes who are engaged in worship at the same time. (It is) hardly necessary to say that no special hour (has been fixed) or any other distinction (has been) made against new entrants. A hopeful feature is (that) priests and other temple officials (are) genuinely (and) whole-heartedly co-operating. They do not seem to suffer any mental strain. (The) INDIAN SOCIAL REFORMER's inferential statement that Trivandrum Ananthapadmanabha temple (is) not covered by the Proclamation (is) incorrect. In fact this temple being near the palace (and) daily attended by (the) Maharajah, (the) Proclamation is given completest effect in it. Forty boys of (the) Harijan hostel, including Pulayas, Parayas, Kuravas had privilege (of) *darshan*

and worship in Ananthapadmanabha temple yesterday. They were permitted to go up to (the) chamber of (the) great image up to the point (that) any devotee of (the) highest caste can go to.

On second December one of our workers took a hundred and fifty Harijans from (a) village thirtyseven miles off to the same Ananthapadmanabha temple without any notice to us. He came yesterday to our office with his party and reported (that) he had been received very kindly and had been allowed *darshan* (and) worship without any restriction. He said also in answer (to) particular inquiries that he had *darshan* from the single slab *mandap*, the maximum point of approach for all devotees even of (the) highest caste. He and his group were fortunate to have *darshan* of His Highness near the precincts of the temple. Again a batch of our Harijan students visited the local important Subramaniaswami temple. They had (a) bath in the sacred tank and had *darshan* without (the) slightest objection (or) restriction (and) the priests were most sympathetic and kind. In fact it may be said they were enthusiastic and joined (*sic*) snapshots taken by (a) photographer at the time. President Parameshwaran Pillai, M. Govindan, District Sangh President, and Sjt. C. Rajagopalachari were at Varkala on (the) second. They made personal enquiries of priests there and the reports were very satisfactory. It was learnt that numbers of Ezavas (and) Harijans were voluntarily going to Janardan temple and enjoying benefit of the Proclamation without any difficulty.

The Proclamation covers 1,526 temples managed or controlled by (the) State. Of these 155 are major temples, including 12 wide-famed shrines of all-India importance, like those of Cape Comorin, Suchindram, Ananthapadmanabha, Janardan of Varkala, Haripad, Ambalapuzha, Vaikam, Aranmula, Chengannoor, Ettumanoor, Neyyattinkara, (and)

Kalady. The fact is there are few temples of any importance outside Government control in Travancore. Reports received from mofussil centres show satisfactory peaceful working of (the) Proclamation in the same faithful manner as at Trivandrum. Such reports (have been) already received from Cape Comorin, Suchindram, Neyyattinkara, Quilon, Haripad, Alleppey, Vaikam, Aranmula, Ettumanoor, Ambalapuzha (and) Parur. The reaction among Ezhavas is very satisfactory. Their jubilation is greater than (that of) all others, both among ordinary folk and educated sections. Reports indicate that even Ezhavas who were bitter and sceptical about Hinduism are displaying great enthusiasm and (a) spirit of genuine co-operation. Orthodox people including Nambudiris have as groups or individuals displayed no hostility, most of them expressing themselves in terms of full approval of (the) Proclamation. We see no signs whatever of resentment. Their behaviour is such as if nothing extraordinary had happened, which from what we know of previous orthodoxy is an astonishing achievement. The noble Proclamation has been followed up by thorough execution.

Changanachery K. Parameshwaran Pillai, President, Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh; M. Govindan, President, Trivandrum District Harijan Sevak Sangh, G. Ramachandran, Secretary, Kerala Harijan Sevak Sangh."

The telegram was received too late for publication in the last issue. That is the handicap of having different places of printing and editing.

When the Temple Entry Proclamation was issued, I had misgivings which I could not and would not suppress. Was it a political document with loopholes and reservations? What would be its effect on the Caste Hindus, if it was a super-

imposed thing? What would be its effect on Harijans? Would it not leave them cold?

Friends took me to task for not sharing their enthusiasm. I could not help it. Not that I had any doubt about the genuine desire of H. H. the Maharani, or the Maharajah, or the Dewan Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar. Indeed I had the privilege of meeting the Maharani and her young hope, the present Maharajah, when I was in Travancore years ago. The Maharani had even then professed her belief in the reform. I had even jokingly asked the boy, as the Maharajah then was, whether he would remove untouchability and throw open temples when he mounted the *gadi* of Travancore. He had enthusiastically said, 'Of course.' Have I not known Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar since 1915 or 1916 as a reformer? My misgivings had a deeper meaning which I had tried to express. It may be that it was my want of faith in the people. There certainly was in the adequacy of the effort and purity of reformers working under the aegis of the Harijan Sevak Sangh.

But the latest happening described in the foregoing telegram with such wealth of detail has dispelled all doubt. The rules reproduced last week have lost their formidableness. The actuality has surpassed all expectations. The enthusiasm of the Harijans, the absence of all opposition to their entrance to the farthest limit permissible to the highest caste, and the willing, nay the hearty co-operation of the officiating priests, show the utter genuineness of the great and sweeping

reform. What seemed impossible for man has been made possible by God. Royal proclamations cannot convert tens of thousands of people. Here, therefore, is an instance of mass conversion of Caste Hindus. It is real because it is spontaneous.

Only a few years ago in Vaikam the Caste Hindus had threatened violence if Harijans crossed even certain roads leading to the Vaikam temple. Now that very temple has been opened to Harijans on absolutely the same terms as to any Caste Hindu. And all this without the slightest pressure from anybody. What was quoted to me as the Shankara Smriti has given place to the Maharajah Smriti whose validity is proved by the unequivocal response of the Caste Hindus as a whole and the equally unequivocal response in another sense by the Harijans. Truly, God is great, if we would but open the eyes of our understanding. My congratulations to the Maharajah and his good mother and his great Dewan, as also the Hindus of Travancore. Let us hope that all caste distinctions, in so far as they connote high and low grades, are things of the past in Travancore. If we garner the enthusiasm of Travancore, it cannot be long before the whole of India catches the Travancore spirit.

TRAVANCORE PILGRIMAGE

(23-1-37)

I am writing this at the Cape in front of the sea where three waters meet and furnish a sight unequalled in the world. For this is no port of call for vessels. Like the goddess the waters around are virgin. The Cape has no population worth the name. The place is therefore eminently fitted for contemplation. This is the third day of the pilgrimage. Having mentally and voluntarily become an untouchable and therefore shunned the temples which were barred against fellow untouchables, I feel like them the joy of the removal of the bar. I approached the great temple in Trivandrum with awe and due veneration. Curiosity had given way to the incoming of something that was to fill the void of years. As I write these lines I am reminded of the peace I felt in the Cathedral in Madras to which Bishop Whitehead had taken me now over twenty years ago. In that Cathedral on the particular morning, so far as I remember, we were the only two persons present. In the Trivandrum Temple there were thousands awaiting the arrival of my party. But there was no noise, no bustle. Untouchables of yesterday were in the silent concourse in perhaps equal numbers. I could not distinguish between the two. All had almost the same marks on their bodies, all had the same kind of garments. Evidently the custom is to have only seamless

wear which need not be more than a *lungi*, never more than a wrapper added to it. The majority including the priests were bare-bodied. In the midst of this vast assemblage, I seemed to enjoy the kind of peace I had felt in the Madras Cathedral. And yet the two were quite different. The Madras peace had no background. This in Padmanabha Temple had. And I would not have experienced it, if the crowd had been boisterous or at all in a non-spiritual mood. All those bare bodies in spotlessly white *lungis* standing row upon row in perfectly silent and reverent attitude produced an impression upon me which will endure till life lasts. The entry into the very spacious temple crowded with images, which the guiding priest in his choice Hindi made almost to speak, was no less soul-stirring. Then we reached the great central image. It was all like a day dream. The knowledge that I was visiting the temple designed specially for the Maharajahs of Travancore and that too in the company of the hitherto despised untouchables, heightened the effect which the images and the surroundings had produced upon me. The silence and the attitude of worship have continued at the three temples I visited between Trivandrum and the Cape. And this morning I visited the famous temple at the Cape, dedicated to the Virgin. Accompanied by a large party of Harijans who were singing bhajans, we passed through the street leading to the temple. The street like the temple was forbidden to the untouchables. But now, without any opposition from anywhere, we walked through it

and then into the temple as if we had never been prohibited. It is a dream realized in a manner and in a place where the realization seemed almost unthinkable before it was realized elsewhere. "You may have temples opened in the North, bût you will never succeed in having them opened in Cochin and Travancore—the citadels of orthodoxy," used to be told before. Now one citadel has yielded with rare generosity and grace. The genuineness of the generosity and grace seems to have disarmed all opposition. The legend attached to the acts of the Maharajahs of Travancore had perhaps its due share in the conversion of the people. The Maharajahs are called 'Padmanabhadas', meaning servants of Padmanabha i.e. God. The Maharajahs are supposed to visit the temple every morning (and I understand they do whilst in Trivandrum) and receive instructions for the day's work from God. The Proclamation is therefore an act of God through His servant, the present Maharajah. Whatever may be the cause, the fact of the Proclamation being given effect to by an overwhelming number of Savarnas and being freely availed of by Avarnas stands out as a miracle.

But the very miracle weighs me down with a sense of responsibility which chastens me and affects my elation. If what is going on today is to be consolidated, there must be continued effort by all true Harijan workers for the education of both Savarnas and Avarnas on the meaning of the Proclamation. But a few months ago it was the fashion on the part of Savarnas to say that

Avarnas did not want temple entry. It was equally the fashion on the part of some vocal members among the Avarnas to say that they did not care for temple entry and that they cared only for economic uplift. Both mistook the meaning of the anti-untouchability campaign. The Travancore experience has opened their eyes. The right of entering temples abolishes untouchability at a stroke — untouchability that prevented a large section of Hindus from sharing with the rest the privilege of worship in the same manner as the latter. Economic uplift was there. But the best among the Avarnas felt the sting of the deprivation. It soured them and angered them against the haughty Savarnas. Now all that has changed. The Avarnas feel the glow of freedom which they had never felt before.

All this marvellous result may easily be nullified if it is not followed out to its logical conclusion. Before Avarnas can forget the past, they must be made conscious of what they have come to. The message of freedom must be carried to the humblest hut. The minds of the Pulayas and the Pariahs should be opened to the implications of the suddenly acquired freedom. This does not need an elaborate programme of of literacy. That must come. But what is needed is immediate human contact. For this an army of volunteer workers of the right type is needed. And just as the message of freedom has to be taken to the Avarna huts, so has it to be taken to the Savarna homes.

Then there is the question of reform of temples from within. Here I cannot do better than quote from a long letter from a Mussalman friend who believes in Hinduism as much as he believes in Islam: "You will soon be going to Travancore to celebrate the entry of Harijans into the temples thrown open to them. It is indeed a step forward. But what we need most is the restoration of the temples to their pristine purity and sanctity. The ideal lying behind temples is most holy. In the temples of ancient India resided great rishis who imparted divine wisdom. Today the priest sits there barring the way to those who need instruction and help to solve the problem of life. Alas! the priests of all religions are more in need of instruction than the poor masses."

These words are true. Never was the need for temple reform more urgent than today. Fortunately in Travancore the vast majority of temples belong to the State and are under special management. They are kept clean and often undergo improvement and addition. They are never empty. They supply a felt want. If the priests had better education and would be custodians of the spirituality of the people, the temples would be houses both of worship and spiritual instruction as they were before.

THE PILGRIMAGE SPEECHES

12-1-37 to 21-1-37

NAMES OF TEMPLES VISITED BY GANDHIJI DURING THE PILGRIMAGE

1. Ananthapadmanabha Temple
2. Neyyattinkara Krishnaswami Temple
3. Thiruvattar Temple
4. Padmanabhapuram Temple
5. Nagercoil Temple
6. Kanyakumari Temple
7. Suchindram Temple
8. Janardana Temple, Varkala
9. Anandavaliswaram Temple
10. Shri Rama Vilasam Bhajan Mutt
11. Haripad Temple
12. Ambalapuzha Temple
13. Thakazhi Temple (Private)
14. Vaikam Temple
15. Ettumanoor Temple
16. Kumaranelloor Temple (Private)
17. Thiruvarpu Temple
18. Thirunakkara Temple
19. Perunna Temple (Private)
20. Thiruvella Temple
21. Chenganoor Temple
22. Thazamon Madom (Private)
23. Aranmula Temple
24. Kottarakara (Private)

TRIVANDRUM

(12-1-37)

[A mammoth meeting of the citizens of Travancore welcomed Gandhiji at the Trivandrum Station, where the City Municipality presented Gandhiji with an address of welcome. The following words in the address were particularly happy:

"Few have made such sacrifices for the land of their birth; fewer still have dedicated their lives to the cause of the poor and the down-trodden. The poor are always with us; but your dynamic personality and your heart, abounding with sympathy, have enabled us to visualise a continent where villages will function as economic entities and social disabilities will cease to mar essential human values. There has been no greater unifying influence in this country than the enthusiasm you have evoked in the heart of every Indian to work actively to remove social and economic evils.

"Our joy in welcoming you on this occasion is enhanced by the fact that your present visit is to guide the celebrations organised to express the genuine and universal satisfaction of the people at the epoch-making Temple Entry Proclamation of His Gracious Highness the Maharajah."

In replying to the address, Gandhiji said:]

A Humble Pilgrim

As you have in your address very properly said, this is not my first visit to Travancore or its capital Trivandrum. Every time I have come to Travancore, I have come almost as a crusader trying to wean Savarna Hindus from the curse

of untouchability. I have had many occasions to address Savarna Hindus and Avarna Hindus (miscalled untouchables or depressed classes) also on this subject. This time, however, I have come as a humble pilgrim to tender my congratulations to H. H. the Maharajah and his good mother Her Highness the Maharani and his able Dewan. With the co-operation of this trinity, if I might so describe the distinguished persons, the great Proclamation has been a settled fact and has now been working with success. The temples have been sealed to me so far, perhaps voluntarily, and I do not know that if I had made the attempt to enter them I should not have been thrown out of them. But even if I had the liberty, having made common cause with the Harijans, I could not avail myself of it. But now that the doors have been flung open to the Harijans also, I shall for the first time take the opportunity of entering your beautiful temple. I take your address as a token of your good-will. I shall have several occasions to speak on the great act of the Maharajah, and I shall therefore refrain from making anything like a speech here.

Proclamation Throws a Tremendous Responsibility

This Proclamation throws a tremendous responsibility on the people of Travancore. Rajahs and Maharajahs can make good laws, but they cannot make the people give proper effect to them. Even tyrants cannot control the hearts of those over whom they hold sway. It all depends on

your hearts to give proper effect to the Proclamation. I would ask you to go to the temples not as curiosity mongers, but in a proper prayerful spirit. If Savarnas went there with mental reservations, the Proclamation will not be properly carried out. *Let the Proclamation proclaim the fact that henceforth in Travancore there is no distinction between Savarnas and Avarnas, touchables and untouchables.* Having said this much, I do not propose to tax your patience any more. I do hope that your good wishes will fit me for my pilgrimage through Travancore. I thank you.

AT THE HINDI CONVOCATION

(13-1-37)

Remember India Your Motherland

I am glad to have been asked to distribute the certificates and prizes to those who have passed the examination. I do not know whether you will follow even my simple Hindi. I see that some of those who have received their certificates today do not follow it. But that is nothing to be ashamed of. Not living in the midst of a Hindi-speaking public, it is quite natural that you should find it difficult to follow spoken Hindi. What is gratifying is that you are taking some pains over learning Hindi in this Southern-most part of India. But please remember that your objective is not to win certificates but to obtain a working knowledge of Hindi. A certificate can but stimulate you to further effort, in order that you may be induced to put up a serious endeavour for an ever-increasing knowledge of Hindi. The first thing that you have to bear in mind is that you belong to India, that India is as much your motherland as of those whose mother tongue is Hindi. You have therefore to think of your country not as extending up to a part of the Arabian sea on the West and to the Ghauts on the East but to the Hindukush on the North, Karachi on the West and Assam on the East. If you went to those remote parts of your country where other languages are spoken, what will you

speak there but Hindi ? You will not find many people capable of understanding English. The temple priest in the great Ananthapadmanabha temple here was speaking perfect Hindi this morning when I was shown over by him through the precincts of that vast temple. His Hindi was certainly more flawless than mine and he made me forget for a moment that I was in Travancore. The uppermost feeling in my mind is not that I am a Gujarati but that I belong to the whole of India.

I would appeal to H. H. the Maharajah and Her Highness the Maharani to promote the development of Hindi studies in Travancore and encourage those who are going in for the study of Hindi. Let the objective of Travancore be to make every literate man and woman here Hindi-knowing.

THE TRIVANDRUM SPEECH

(13-1-37)

A Purely Religious Revival

[The following is the full text of Gandhiji's speech at the mammoth public meeting at Trivandrum.]

I wish I were able to speak to you in your own mother tongue. I am sorry that I have not yet been able to learn the very musical language that you speak, and it is a matter of equal sorrow to me that you do not understand the national language of India—Hindi-Hindustani. Therefore we have to fall back on the cumbrous process of translation. But it is inevitable if I am at all to reach your hearts somewhat. I assure you I do not want to make here an idle speech, nor am I fond of hearing my own voice. I know that silence is often better than speech. But I know also from experience that there are occasions when speech becomes a necessity, and probably this is one of those occasions.

Thanksgiving

I thank you very much for having asked me to preside over this celebrations meeting. I thank you also for presenting me with this address. You have already tendered your hearty congratulations to His Highness the Maharajah and Maharani and Sachivottama Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar. I want to associate myself fully with the expression of your joy and congratulations. The joy is written

on the numerous faces of this assembly over the restoration of a right which was taken away from you, no one knows how many years ago. You have done well also in tracing the historical sequence of the agitation for opening all the temples to the Avarna Hindus in Travancore, and I again associate myself with you in the praise you have bestowed upon His Holiness the late Narayanaswami Guru and also upon that brave soul Madhavan. You will also let me recall in this connection two names—I mean the late Krishnaswami who at the time of the Vaikam Satyagraha used to lead the prayer in his own inimitable manner with recitations of verses from 'Gita Govinda'. Though a staunch Brahman and lover of his religion, he made common cause with all the Avarnas. And I may not forget also one who is still in our midst—Sjt. Kelappan Nair. These brave men laid the foundation of the thing we see today in our midst.

But I think that we may not forget the orthodoxy which has come to our assistance at this hour, and in this connection I suppose I may not omit to mention the Nambudiri orthodox people whom I had found to my great regret very difficult to convert to the obvious truth. If they and the other orthodox people had not recognized the spirit of the times, it might be that they would have rendered the task of their Highnesses well-nigh impossible or, at least, ineffective.

Let the Senior Maharani also Rejoice

In this connection let me recall also a meeting I had with the Senior Maharani years ago. That

meeting took place when the Vaikam Satyagraha was going on, and I appealed to her, with all the earnestness at my command, to come to the assistance of all those who were fighting a forlorn battle, to issue a new Smriti and to declare all the temples open. She and her husband who was present at the interview expressed their sympathy with this movement. They both welcomed the movement that was going on in Travancore for the liberation of the Avarnas. But they felt burdened with the responsibility of a great State and told me that the time had not come for taking that great step. She then thought that it was still necessary to sound Savarna opinion and to convert it to the reform. Several years have passed by since that interview. Thanks be to God that you did not remain idle during all these years, and *but for the sustained efforts on your part to arouse both Avarna and Savarna public opinion, even the Maharajah with all the good-will in the world would have found it impossible to issue the Proclamation.* I hope that the Senior Maharani is today rejoicing over the great change that has come over Travancore and over the fact that the Proclamation is being welcomed by all and sundry—both Avarnas and Savarnas.

Efficacy of Temples Enhanced

I am hoping also that with the incoming of this great change over the State of Travancore the Savarna Hindus are as enthusiastic in visiting temples as the Avarna Hindus. I want to tell all Savarna men and women, who have from day to

day gone to these temples in search of blessings and in the hope that their prayers will be answered. I want to assure them that the temples have gained in efficacy and not lost one whit from the efficacy they enjoyed. Our shastras teach us — I am not giving you any new truth — that efficacy lies in our hearts, not in stone however well carved it may be, and I do hope that your faith will not fail you because a large part of your co-religionists have had an ancient right restored to them of offering their prayers in the same manner and on the same conditions as you offer them.

One Sorrow

I would like to mention one sorrow that has oppressed me, ever since I came here. I have wondered why you have called these celebrations Ezhava Temple Entry Proclamation Celebrations. I wonder if presently we shall have all-Travancore Pulaya and Pariah Celebrations! I know and I grant that Ezhavas are a great and growing and important community in Travancore, but have I not seen the Pulayas and Pariahs of Travancore? When I have met them I have not been able to stare them straight in their faces. I have felt deeply humiliated. I shall never forget the sight of an old Nayadi shaking with fear, as he was brought to me, and as he tried to hand me a sheet of paper which had been put into his hands. He was brought to me in Cochin as I was passing through the crowds in the streets. I was told that he held in his hand an address to be given me on behalf of the Nayadis. His withered hands,

as they were shaking, could not deliver that address in my hands. There was no lustre in his eyes. I do not know that I saw even a ray of hope in those deep sunken eyes. He did not know what he was being called upon to do. I do not know that he could understand the choice Malayalam which the Nambudiri volunteer was speaking. I seized the situation at a glance. I hung my head in shame and sorrow, and I felt it my duty to snatch that precious paper from his hands. Why is he not a member of today's Celebration Committee? I know that he is nameless. Most probably he is dead. If he is alive, perhaps he does not know what is happening in Travancore today. And so I asked myself whether you members of this Celebration Committee, you members of this vast gathering, do or do not represent such men. And I must tell you with all respect and humility that if this vast assembly does not represent these people, then I am certain that there is no place in your midst for me. *If this is a purely religious movement, if this is a purely religious revival, if it has no taint of base 'self' in it, then you will be denying yourself and nullifying the effect of this great Proclamation if you do not represent the lowest and the least in our midst.*

Carry out New Smriti

You heard with what force Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar spoke to this meeting. The Maharajah has given you a Smriti, but it is for you to carry it out and breathe life into it, and you will

hopelessly fail to do that unless you rise to the occasion and see to it that this religious spirit pervades the whole of Travancore—both Avarnas and Savarnas. I tell you if you approach this great step, each with his own mental reservation, and not give effect to it whole-heartedly, you will find this Proclamation a nine days' wonder. Therefore, I want you to understand, whilst you are properly rejoicing over this Proclamation and celebrating it with the joy and zeal that I see on your faces, that you will not be doing your duty if you do not realize your responsibility to the whole of the community that had been so far excluded.

I see that you are now getting restless. I do not propose to keep you longer than is absolutely necessary. I am speaking to you from the fulness of my heart, and when heart is speaking to hearts, it expects to find a lodgment in those hearts. I do not want to keep you more than perhaps ten minutes now. I shall try to omit many of the things I wanted to say this evening, and shall seek another occasion for doing so.

Temples — Links with God

I must mention what I saw at the great Padmanabha temple. It will perhaps best illustrate what I am saying about the purely religious and spiritual revival. In the days of my youth I went to many temples with the faith and devotion with which my parents had fired me. But of late years I have not been visiting temples, and ever since I have been engaged in anti-untouchability

work, I have refrained from going to temples unless they were open to everyone called untouchable. So what I saw this morning at the temples dawned upon me with the same newness with which it must have dawned upon so many Avarna Hindus who must have gone to the temple after the Proclamation. In imagination my mind travelled back to the pre-historic centuries when they began to convey the message of God in stone and metal. I saw quite clearly that the priest who was interpreting each figure in his own choice Hindi did not want to tell me that each of those figures was God. But without giving me that particular interpretation he made me realise that *these temples were so many bridges between the Unseen, Invisible and Indefinable God and ourselves who are infinitesimal drops in the Infinite Ocean.* We the human family are not all philosophers. We are of the earth very earthy, and we are not satisfied with contemplating the Invisible God. Somehow or other we want something which we can touch, something which we can see, something before which we can kneel down. It does not matter whether it is a book, or an empty stone building, or a stone building inhabited by numerous figures. A book will satisfy some, an empty building will satisfy others, and many others will not be satisfied unless they see something inhabiting these empty buildings. Then I ask you to approach these temples not as if they represented a body of superstitions. If you will approach these temples with faith in them, you will know each time you visit them you will come away

from them purified, and with your faith more and more in the living God.

Abolish All Distinctions

Anyway I have looked upon this Proclamation as a purely religious act. I have regarded this visit to Travancore in the spirit of a pilgrimage, and I am going to these temples as an untouchable suddenly made touchable. If all of you will approach this Proclamation in this spirit, you will abolish all distinctions between Savarnas and Avarnas as also all those distinctions which unfortunately still exist between Avarnas and Avarnas. Finally you will not be satisfied until you have lifted up your brothers and sisters who are supposed to be the least and the lowest, to heights which you have attained yourselves. True spiritual regeneration must include economic uplift and the removal of ignorance and everything that goes to retard human progress.

May God enable you to realize to the full the possibilities that are embedded in this Proclamation of the Maharajah I thank you for giving me this patient hearing.

VENGANOOR

(14-1-37)

[Venganoor is a Pulaya centre. The Pulayas had mustered in their thousands under their leader Ayyan Kali, who has been working amongst them for thirty years, to listen to Gandhiji.]

Make a Wise and Religious Use

It gives me great pleasure to be in your midst and greater pleasure still to realise under what auspices I am touring Travancore today. I have in mind the great Proclamation that has practically removed untouchability from Travancore. I say 'practically removed' because the Proclamation cannot do everything, although it has worked wonders. To remove untouchability root and branch from this soil and for that matter from India, rests with you and me.

In Ayyan Kali, whom you half in jest and half in endearment call the Pulaya Rajah, you have an indefatigable worker. I understand that under his leadership you have been making steady progress and I have no doubt that this gracious Proclamation will quicken the progress you are making. I must not keep you or keep myself long as I have a heavy day in front of me. If I had the time, I would love to pass a whole day with you and know many of you intimately. As it is, I have to be satisfied with having seen your beaming faces and making such acquaintance as I can within the few minutes I have in your midst.

I would like to leave just one thought with you before I go. I hope you will make a wise and religious use of this opportunity to go to the temples. It depends upon our mental condition whether we gain something or do not gain anything by going to the temples. We have to approach these temples in a humble penitent mood. They are so many houses of God. Of course God resides in every human form, indeed in every particle of His creation, in everything that is on this earth. But since we very fallible mortals do not appreciate the fact that God is everywhere, we impute special sanctity to temples and think that God resides there. And so *when we approach these temples we must cleanse our bodies, our minds and our hearts, and we should enter them in a prayerful mood and ask God to make us purer men and purer women for having entered their portals.* And if you will take this advice of an old man, this physical deliverance that you have secured will be a deliverance of the soul.

TECKALAI

(14-1-37)

[Teckalai is another big Pulaya centre in the hilly disticts of South Travancore.]

Learn and Teach Art of Worship

I thank you for the addresses, but I must remind you that they should be brief, to the point and written either in Hindi or in Malayalam. Surely an address written in English cannot be understood by large masses of people whom we want to serve. If they were written in Hindi, they could catch at least a few words common to both Hindi and Malayalam. You will perhaps say that just as the masses do not understand English, neither do they understand Hindi. But I tell you it does not come to the same thing. Those who are innocent of English surely can pick up a few words of Hindi. And then why should you enclose these addresses in hideous frames? How am I to take all these home? The glass is sure to be damaged, as indeed this one has been damaged and it has thus become a dangerous article to carry.

One word about the Proclamation which has brought me here. I know that your presence here is a sign that you are sharing the celebrations going on in Travancore. Every one of you should understand the significance of the Proclamation. If all men and women here think or harbour untouchability in their hearts, they have not given effect to the Proclamation. That Proclamation

tells you—every man and woman or child that henceforth there is no untouchability in Travancore, that in the sight of God and man, Nairs and Nambudiris, Ezavas and Pulayas and Pariah and what not are all equal children of God. And wher they get entrance to the Holy of Holies, natura all other distinctions fall to the ground. Theref those who are better off will take care to that they will raise those who are worse economically and socially. And if you have flattered yourself with the belief that you are Savarnas, you should bring the Avarnas out of their houses and teach them the art of worship. But I know that even the Savarnas have forgotten the art of worship. However, now that the Proclamation has purified the atmosphere, you must learn the art and teach it to the Avarnas. I hope and pray that you will do so.

NEYATTINKARAI

[Neyattinkarai has a fine temple with the image of Bala-Krishna. Near the temple is a jack tree, several centuries old, which, under the shadow of the Deity, afforded protection to Raja Marthanda Varma, in its capacious hollow, while the enemies were pursuing him. A large gathering of Nairs and Avarnas listened to Gandhiji's message.]

Let Travancore Save Hinduism

I thank you for the three addresses you have read or partially read here. I wish there was time to listen to all the addresses in full. I have read the Hindi address in full and the second, which is really a report of the Harijan work, I promise to read in full. Needless to say that I associate myself with you in your congratulations to the trinity responsible for the Proclamation over which Travancore is rejoicing, and I congratulate the Savarnas of this place who unanimously and heartily endorsed the Proclamation. Of course, it is open to the Savarnas and Avarnas to make the gracious Proclamation perfectly useless,—the Savarnas may be sullenly discontented and not purify their hearts of untouchability, and the Avarnas can make it perfectly ineffective by misunderstanding the grace of the Proclamation and by not going to temples in the right spirit. The Maharajah, the Maharani and the Dewan have done their duty by issuing the Proclamation which has no reservation, mental or otherwise,

sinful and has not the stamp of God's approval. And so, as I said, it is *the spirit of God that moved the Maharajah to take the great step he has taken*, and I wish to congratulate you who are the beneficiaries under the great Proclamation. It is a great act whose significance we are yet too near in time to realise. During my last tour I addressed a gathering outside the forbidding-looking temple walls as they then appeared to me. I regard myself voluntarily as a Pulaya or a Pariah, the lowest amongst the low, a Harijan amongst Harijans. But the Maharajah himself as I have now learnt bears the title of servant of God, *i. e.* Harijan, and proudly signs himself as such. No doubt he is the first among God's servants, let us hope by right of service. He is not the first lord among lords and masters. In service there is always open and meritorious competition. It demands no reward, no distinction. Let us look at the Proclamation in this light. Let Nambudiris and other Brahmans and the so-called high caste people of Travancore rise to the occasion and be voluntarily Harijans amongst Harijans, servants of God, and let all the world know by their action that in virtue of the Proclamation there is none high and none low but all are equal in the eyes of God.

NAGERCOIL

(14-1-37)

[A gathering of nothing less than 50,000 people made an attempt to listen to Gandhiji's message, which the partial failure of the loud-speakers and inadequate translation made it well-nigh impossible. The two addresses by the Hindi-loving public were, as we ascertained later, from the Malayali and the Tamil sections.]

A Penitent Pilgrim

I am not a stranger to Nagercoil and for that matter to the whole of Travancore. You have more than once made me acquainted with the Nagercoil crowds. You have on more than one occasion shown your boundless enthusiasm, if it was only in point of attendance. You do not expect me to give you lengthy replies to the addresses you have been good enough to present to me. Indeed you need not have presented me with any address at all on this occasion. No doubt I have come to share in your rejoicings over the Proclamation. But I have come more as a penitent pilgrim than anything else. And my mind just now is so full of the duty that lies in front of you in virtue of that Proclamation that I cannot divide my attention among other things. Nevertheless I must express my astonishment at getting double addresses from those who are engaged in carrying on Hindi propaganda. I have not been able to find out the reason for this overlapping of energy, but I dare not give time to unravelling this mystery.

Realise Duty Arising from Proclamation

Let us consider the duty devolving on those for whom the Proclamation has been designed. You may take this Proclamation as an ordinary act of the State to which for the most part people are indifferent, or you may regard it as an extraordinary act of the State on which the future of Hinduism depends; and if you assimilate the spirit of the Proclamation, the result will be astonishing not only for Travancore but for the whole of India. This untouchability was, and I suppose I must still say it is, a weedy growth upon Hinduism, so much so that it threatened to smother the finest flowers of Hinduism. I regard this Proclamation as a very brave attempt—an outstanding attempt—to rid Hinduism of the curse of untouchability, and in issuing the Proclamation *the Maharajah and his advisers have laid the axe at the root of untouchability.* But the Proclamation will be of no use if there is no response on the part of the Savarna and Avarna Hindus. Ever since my coming to Travancore, I have been doing nothing but visiting temples which were until a little while ago forbidden ground to me by my own choice. So long as these temples were barred against the major part of the Hindu population of Travancore, the temples could go on as they liked. The Proclamation is the beginning of the process of purification of Hinduism, and in the process both Savarnas and Avarnas have to play their due part. It would be a great reflection on Savarna Hindus if the untouchables of yesterday were to be left to their own resources. It is therefore absolutely necessary

for you and me to find out the place temples have in the growth of Hinduism. You and I have to find out whether a living God resides in these temples. I assure you that our search will be in vain unless we put our hearts into it and apply our minds to it. In all humility I fancy that I know how that search is to be made. But during this hurried tour and hurriedly got up meeting, it is not possible to dilate on the search. I must seek some other and better opportunity for making that enquiry. It may be sufficient for the time being if I have succeeded in stimulating your appetite for that search. It will give me great satisfaction if I have succeeded in convincing you that we may not take this Proclamation in the ordinary way. It will be enough if every man and woman realises his and her duty with reference to the working of this Proclamation. With this thought I propose to leave you tonight.

SHIVAGIRI MATH IN VARKALA

(16-1-37)

[Gandhiji worshipped at the famous shrine of Janardana Swami at Varkala, an easy distance from the Shivagiri Math. The shrine is one of the most beautifully situated in India on a high plateau, of which the foot is washed by the waves of the sea. The shrine attracts pilgrims from all parts of India. An inscription dating 1252 A. D. shows that the shrine was rebuilt in that year. There is a temple bell, evidently presented by the Dutch as the Latin inscription thereon shows.

At Shivagiri Math, the Ezhavas accorded Gandhiji a warm welcome. The Swami in charge of the Math in his speech of welcome observed that Gandhiji had visited the Math on two previous occasions and that the Swami was sure that Gandhiji had always taken away some inspiration from their Guru Narayanaswami, and that he had helped in spreading the doctrine, one religion, one caste and one God. Their Guru Narayanaswami had come to reconstruct society. His desire was to annihilate caste. He was the Maharajah Ashoka of their caste. Gandhiji, suggested the speaker, should spend a little of his time to understand the life and teaching of the Guru Narayanaswami, and that he would find as a result of his study, there was another Mahatma who had devoted his life to reconstruct India. The Swami described the Math as a mount of ideas and the fittest place for Gandhiji to reside and from which to carry on his work for India.

Replying to the Swami, Gandhiji said:]

A Physical and Spiritual Scavenger

It gives me very great pleasure to be in

your midst for the third time. The first time I was here, I had the pleasure of paying my respects to your Guru, the great Swami. You have invited me to study his work in your midst. Well, I did so as fervently as I could even on the first occasion I was here. I had long and serious discussions with him over matters of common interest, and I had no difficulty in agreeing with him on many subjects of which we spoke. I had discussions also at that time with his first and learned disciples. After his lamented death, his disciples sent me many things including a collection of the Swami's sayings. I studied them with the respect that the work of such a great man demanded.

You are quite right in saying that every time I have come here, I have taken away something for myself. I admit that I have no title whatsoever to the title of 'Mahatma'. That title has often embarrassed me, sometimes it has stunk in my nostrils. This has happened whenever with the name of 'Mahatma' on their lips people have done something unworthy. I have no new religion to give, no new truth to expound. *My humble role is that of a scavenger both literally and spiritually.* I know the outward art of cleaning the streets, commodes and latrines, and I am endeavouring to the extent of my ability to clean my inside also, so that I may become a faithful interpreter of the truth as I may see it.

Caste and Varna

Of course I had many things in common with the teachings of the Swami. I do believe that

there is only one Religion in the world, but I also believe that although it is one mighty tree, it has many branches. I tried to explain this thing to the Swami as I recollect even today. And even as all the branches take their sap from one source, even so all religions derive their essence from one fountain-source. Of course there can be only one God if there is one religion, and God who is one complete whole cannot have many branches. But He is invisible and indefinable and, therefore, one might literally say that He has as many names as there are human beings on earth. No matter by what name we describe Him, He is the same without a second and if we are all children of the same Creator, naturally there cannot be any caste amongst us. We are one brotherhood and sisterhood, and therefore there cannot be any distinction of high and low amongst us. There are Savarnas and Avarnas, or all are Savarnas or all are Avarnas.

But each one of us has his or her occupation cut out for himself or herself. This occupation is not caste, but it is known in Hinduism as *varna*. *varna* which has nothing in common with caste as we understand today. Caste is a man-made institution, only fit to be destroyed, but *varna* is a divine law. We may disregard it to our harm, and we will profit by it if we follow it. A carpenter, a blacksmith, a mason, a scavenger, a brick-layer, a teacher, a soldier—these have different occupations, but none is high and none is low among them. And if we begin to overlap one another, we create a *sankara* (confusion) of all *varnas*. Therefore,

immediately you take away the sting of distinction from different *varnas,* it becomes not only a law, but it gives us an opportunity of doing what we are particularly fitted for. That is what Hinduism teaches us. That is my interpretation of all true religions. That is my interpretation of Hinduism pure and undefiled. So far as I understood the great Swami, he did not dissent from the view I have just expounded to you.

You have tickled me by inviting me to come and settle down here. The temptation is really great. This is one of the pleasantest spots in India and the weather here is magnificent. I know that if I should come here, I should be surrounded by friends who would provide me with all my needs. But the path of life, if taken religiously, is straight and narrow. It has been described as sharp as the edge of a sword. You cannot look this side or that side without stumbling into an abyss. And the Gita says that better by far is the religion which is cut out for you rather than one for which you are not born. Therefore, although the temptation you have held forth is very great, I must resist it just now.

PARIPALLI

(16-1-37)

[This is a centre of the hill-tribes in the north. Thousands had gathered here under their leader Raman Pillai. Their most beautifully artistic arches testified to their sense of art, and some of them had walked miles to attend the meeting.]

You Have Deserved the Proclamation

It gives me great pleasure to be in your midst. I see from your address which I have already read that many of you have walked nearly 22 miles to come to this meeting. I am sorry that it was not possible for the managers of this tour to enable me to go to your places in the hills.

I have heard something of the great work that is being done among the hill tribes of Kadakal and Paripalli by Sjt. Raman Pillai. Evidently from his hoary beard he appears to be as old as I, if not older. But from the energy with which he addressed this meeting, I thought he was a young old man. It gives me great joy to know that in him you have an indefatigable worker, guide and friend. I am glad to find that several activities are being conducted for your benefit. You are right in saying that this Proclamation is epoch-making and glorious. It is like a gift suddenly come in possession of a man who is not fit to receive it. The suddenness of it shows that it is something for which neither you

nor I were prepared. Not that what has been given was not due to us. But the deprivation of many long years seemed to make the recipient of the gift unfit for the reception. But what I have been witnessing round me shows that you were fit for the gift, and having got the gift it appears you were never deprived of it. For I know that wherever I have visited temples — where there were Harijans and non-Harijans — I fail to see any distinction between the two. The demeanour and attitude of the Harijans seemed to be as if they were to the manner born. They were spotlessly clean and their attitude of reverence left nothing to be desired. There was among all these men and women a dignity that was truly captivating.

But we should be making a serious mistake if we thought that nothing now remains to be done. The present gives the promise of a bright future if we take the full advantage of the opportunities given to us by reason of the Proclamation. I do hope that many Savarna Hindu workers will come forward to carry the message of the Proclamation to the Avarnas, to take them out of their huts, accustom them to going to the temples, and explain to them the implications of the Proclamation. For sceptics and hertics the temples have no meaning but for one who has believed in temples there is no mistaking the fact that constant temple-going changes the whole outlook on life of temple-goers. May this be realised among all these so-called Avarnas.

QUILON

(16-1-37)

[Quilon is one of the most ancient places in Travancore, and the meeting place of several faiths and also the place of several foreign factories. Durga, to whom the temple here is dedicated, is known as Anandavalleeshwari, and the temple known after that name.]

A God-Inspired Act

I am deeply grateful to you for having waived your undoubted right of reading your address. You have been good enough to save your time and my time. I am no stranger to this place. I have many a happy recollection of my stay here. When I came here last it was thought a presumption for an Avarna to enter a temple, but now I have come to share with you your rejoicing over the Proclamation. It is a brave, generous and gracious act and it combines the enthusiasm of the young Maharajah with the wisdom and courage of Her Highness the Maharani, his mother. As you may be aware, I had the pleasure and privilege of waiting upon them in their palace and renewing their acquaintance. The Maharani's queenly heart was full of joy over the manner in which the Avarnas and the Savarnas had received the Proclamation, and I saw the young Maharajah nodding his assent to everything that his gracious mother was saying to him. And every lover of the State, from one end of India to the other has testified to the fact that *the Proclamation lacks nothing in completeness*. By a stroke

of the pen, it opens all State temples to all those who call themselves Hindus without the slightest reservation. *As I have said so often such an act could not be prompted by any purely worldly considerations.* There must have been the spirit of God inspiring both the wise mother and the brave son.

Visible Demonstration of Revival

As I have been going from temple to temple and looking at the beaming faces of perhaps tens of thousands of men and women, mingling together without the slightest distinction, I confess I have not been able to restrain my joy at the sight. I have called it a great religious revival that is going on in Travancore. That religious revival began some years ago, but we had no visible sign, no visible demonstration of it. But *this Proclamation is a visible demonstration of the revival which he who runs may read.* To me it is a great sign of purification of our ancient faith. I have held for now close on half a century that untouchability is the greatest blot on Hinduism, and therefore you can only imagine—I cannot describe it fully—my joy over the Proclamation. I congratulate all the Travancorians on this signal gift which you have received from your prince. I only hope that you, who have begun so well, will also end well, till *the light that has been lit in Travancore will spread throughout Bharatvarsha.* The Maharani and the Maharajah and the Dewan have done their duty. They can do no more. But if this light is to spread throughout India, it will be purely as a result of your response to the Proclamation. You

have to understand the implications of this great act and your response must not be purely formal, but must come from the bottom of your heart and then, and not till then, will be manifested the great change of heart for which I have been pining all these years and for which I have always been fervently praying.

The Essence of Hinduism

Let me for a few moments consider what Hinduism consists of, what it is that has fired so many saints about whom we have historical record. Why has it contributed so many philosophers to the world? What is it in Hinduism that has so enthused its devotees for centuries? Did they see untouchability in Hinduism and still enthuse over it? In the midst of my struggle against untouchability I have been asked by several workers as to the essence of Hinduism. We have no simple *Kalema,* they said, that we find in Islam, nor have we 3.16 John of the Bible. Have we or have we not something that will answer the demands of the most philosophic among the Hindus or the most matter-of-fact among them? Some have said, and not without good reason, that the *Gayatri* answers that purpose. I have perhaps recited the *Gayatri Mantra* thousands of times, having understood the meaning of it. But still it seems to me that it did not answer the whole of my aspirations. Then as you are aware I have, for years past, been swearing by the *Bhagawadgita,* and have said that it answers all my difficulties and has been my *Kamadhenu* (the Cow of plenty), my guide, my

open sesame, on hundreds of moments of doubt and difficulty. I cannot recall a single occasion when it has failed me. But it is not a book that I can place before the whole of this audience. It requires a prayerful study before the *Kamadhenu* yields the rich milk she holds in her udders.

But I have fixed upon one *mantra* that I am going to recite to you, as containing the whole essence of Hinduism. Many of you, I think, know the *Ishopanishad*. I read it years ago with translation and commentary. I learnt it by heart in Yeravda Jail. But it did not then captivate me, as it has done during the past few months, and I have now come to the final conclusion that if all the Upanishads and all the other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes, and if only the first verse in the *Ishopanishad* were left intact in the memory of Hindus, Hinduism would live for ever.

This Mantra Satisfies All Cravings

Now this *mantra* divides itself in four parts. The first part is ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत्. It means, as I would translate: All this that we see in this great Universe is pervaded by God. Then come the second and third parts which read together, as I read them: तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथाः. I divide these into two and translate them thus: Renounce it and enjoy it. There is another rendering which means the same thing, though: Enjoy what He gives you. Even so you can divide it into two parts. Then follows the final and most important part, मा गृधः. कस्यस्विद्धनम्

which means: Do not covet anybody's wealth or possession. All the other *mantras* of that ancient Upanishad are a commentary or an attempt to give us the full meaning of the first *mantra*. As I read the *mantra* in the light of the Gita or the Gita in the light of the *mantra*, I find that the Gita is a commentary on this *mantra*. It seems to me to satisfy the cravings of the socialist and the communist, of the philosopher and the economist. I venture to suggest to all who do not belong to the Hindu faith that it satisfies their cravings also. And if it is true – and I hold it to be true – you need not take anything in Hinduism which is inconsistent with or contrary to the meaning of this *mantra*. What more can a man in the street want to learn than this that the one God and Creator and Master of all that lives pervades the Universe?

If All Will Be Trustees –

The three other parts of the *mantra* follow directly from the first. If you believe that God pervades everything that He has created, you must believe that you cannot enjoy anything that is not given by Him. And seeing that He is the Creator of His numberless children, it follows that you cannot covet anybody's possession. If you think that you are one of His numerous creatures, it behoves you to renounce everything and lay it at His feet. That means that the act of renunciation of everything is not a mere physical renunciation but represents a second or new birth. It is a deliberate act, not done in

ignorance. It is therefore a regeneration. And then, since he who holds the body must eat and drink and clothe himself, he must naturally seek all that he needs from Him. And he gets it as a natural reward of that renunciation. As if this was not enough, the *mantra* closes with this magnificent thought: Do not covet anybody's possession. The moment you carry out these precepts you become a wise citizen of the world, living at peace with all that lives. It satisfies one's highest aspirations on this earth and hereafter. No doubt it will not satisfy the aspiration of him who does not believe in God and His undisputed sovereignty. It is no idle thing that the Maharajah of Travancore is called *Padmanabhadas*. It is a great thought. We know that God Himself has taken the title of *Dasanudas*—servant of servants. If all the princes would call themselves servants of God, they would be correctly describing themselves, but they cannot be servants of God unless they are servants of the people. And if zamindars and monied men and all who have possessions would treat themselves as trustees and perform the act of renunciation that I have described, this world would indeed be a blessed world to live in.

Carry Mantra to Every Home

I must not labour the meaning of this *mantra* any longer. I know that many of you here are learned men. My knowledge of Sanskrit is poor and I am a man of the street having no pretention to learning, but what little I have read and what

little has commended itself to me I have assimilated. I suggest to you that this *mantra* has nothing abstruse in it. Anybody can understand its meaning and follow it out in daily life. Therefore I want to suggest to the whole of this audience that they should carry the whole of this *mantra* in Malayalam to every home and help everyone to shape their lives in accordance with this *mantra,* and I make bold to say that having done so they may, without reading any other scriptures, call themselves Hindus. Disputes and differences arise when you begin to read big tomes and discuss interpretations of varying dictums contained in them. But now that, in virtue of this Proclamation, the distinction between high and low is abolished in Travancore, and there are no Avarnas and Savarnas, you will see that this *mantra* will satisfy all your wants. You will model your conduct in the spirit of this *mantra* and you will not find it difficult to live in the spirit of this Proclamation. I am saying this with a full sense of my responsibility. It is for you the people of Travancore to make or unmake this act of the great king. The opportunity for serving one's faith or one's fellowmen does not easily occur. That opportunity has come to you all of a sudden. May God grant you the measure of understanding that is necessary to live up to the spirit of this Proclamation.

THATHARAMPALLI

(17-1-37)

Bearing of Hindi on Proclamation

As a matter of fact I am ill able to speak to you this morning. Ever since my arrival in Travancore I have been suffering from a bad cold and I am afraid I cannot give you a settled speech. I am glad Hindi is making steady progress. I wish everyone knowing English will hold it a crying shame not to be able to speak Hindi as well as English. I tell you it will not take as many years as the study of English does. One reason why it is easier than English is that it has a vocabulary which is common to Malayalam and, even like geographical and climatic conditions, the religious conditions of this great country make all the tongues of India in many respects common. The sound of different languages does not strike as strange to our ears. When I hear Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam, Ooriya or Bengali, I assure you my ears do not notice any foreign element in that sound and although I do not know these languages I can very often gather the drift because of the common words in these languages. Now if I were to read this Hindi address to you, I am sure you will notice that many words in it are common to Malayalam. Addressing a meeting in Bangalore, I showed that the majority of words in Hindi were quite common to Kannada.

Now I have not said all these things in order to worry you for nothing. From an all-India point of view, it is a foregone conclusion that you must know Hindi. But it has something to do with the Proclamation also. If the Savarnas are to give effect to the Proclamation, they must be blood-brothers with the Avarnas, and for that you must spread yourself amongst Avarnas. And if there is any spiritualiy in you, it will overflow in many directions. I had a Pulaya girl coming to me this morning with a petition in her hand. She was a very good specimen of humanity, but she presented her petition in bad English. She wanted some help for her English studies. The person who wrote the petition for her had misrepresented things, but I could not ascertain the correct position from her as she could neither talk Hindi nor English. I have of course handed over her petition to the local Harijan Sevak Sangh. But if this girl had been taught Hindi, I am sure she would have been able to talk to me fluently. I must tell you that a girl of thirteen should be able to call herself an Indian, not merely a Travancorian. Had she known Hindi, she wonld have been able to travel from one end of India to another without much difficulty. Now fly with me on the wings of your imagination to the Hindukush. What would happen to the girl there? She would be as much at home in Kashmir as here. Here is the point I am trying to make. Supposing you have understood the point of my remark and decided to go about amongst Avarnas, you will teach them not English but Hindi, and thereby you will enrich yourself and enrich the

boys and girls you will take up, and you will broaden your outlook and theirs, and not commit the atrocious blunder of giving them a modicum of bad English, but straightaway you will give them the treasures hidden in Tulsidas. For believe me the Proclamation can become a dead letter not through any fault of the Maharajah but through sins of omissions and commissions on your part.

HARIPAD

(17-1-37)

[Haripad is known for its famous temple of Subrahmanyam, full of some exquisite wood carvings.]

Renunciation Essential for Enjoyment

At this meeting I would love to detain you for a few minutes on the message of Hinduism I gave to the meeting in Quilon last night. I ventured at that meeting to say that the whole of Hinduism could be summed up in the first verse of *Ishopanishad.* I suggested then that if all other Hindu scriptures happened to be reduced to ashes and to go out of the memory of men and if only that one verse were to abide with us, the destruction would be no loss. Hinduism would even then remain with us. The original Sanskrit of the *mantra* is perhaps as easy as anybody learning Sanskrit could possibly wish. This Upanishad enjoys the reputation of being part of the original Vedas. It is the shortest Upanishad known to us. But as I have said if we had only the first verse of that Upanishad remaining with us, it would be enough to supply all our wants. Let me repeat that *mantra* in my faulty Sanskrit pronunciation :

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किंच जगत्यां जगत् ।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुंजीथाः मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

Those who know a little bit of Sanskrit will find that there is nothing abstruse there that you find in other Vedic *mantras*, and its meaning is

simply this: All that there is in this Universe, great or small, including the tiniest atom, is pervaded by God, known as Creator or Lord. *Isha* means the Ruler, and He who is the Creator naturally by very right becomes the Ruler too. And here in this verse the seer has chosen no other epithet for the Deity but that of the Ruler, and he has excepted nothing from His jurisdiction. He says everything that we see is pervaded by the Deity, and from that naturally the other parts of the *mantra* follow. Thus he says, renounce everything, i. e. everything that is on this Universe, the whole of the Universe, and not only this tiny globe of ours, renounce it. He asks us to renounce it as we are such insignificant atoms that if we had any idea of possession it would seem ludicrous. And then, says the Rishi, the reward of renunciation is भुंजीथा: *i. e.* enjoyment of all you need. But there is a meaning about the word 'enjoy'—you might as well say use, etc.—but it means that you may not take more than is necessary for your growth. Therefore this enjoyment or use is limited by two conditions. One is the act of renunciation or, as the author of the *Bhagavata* would say, enjoy in the spirit of कृष्णार्पणमस्तु सर्वम् (*All is dedicated* to Him). And every day in the morning, everyone who believes in *Bhagavata Dharma* has to dedicate his thoughts, words and deeds to Krishna, and not until he has performed that daily act of renunciation or dedication has he the right of touching anything or drinking even a cup of water. And when a man has performed that act of renunciation and dedication, he derives from that act the right of

eating, drinking, clothing and housing himself to the extent necessary for his daily life. Therefore take it as you like, either in the sense that the enjoyment or use is the reward of renunciation, or that the renunciation is the condition of enjoyment, *renunciation is essential for our very existence, for our soul.* And as if that condition given in the *mantra* was incomplete, the Rishi took care to complete it by adding: 'Do not covet what belongs to another.' Now I suggest to you that the whole of the philosophy or religion found in any part of the world is contained in this *mantra*, and it excludes everything contrary to it. According to the canons of interpretation, anything that is inconsistent with Shruti—and the *Ishopanishad* is a Shruti—is to be rejected altogether.

Temples Purified

Now I should like to apply this *mantra* to our own condition in virtue of the Proclamation. Whilst I have unstintingly associated myself in your rejoicings over this great Proclamation and in tendering my thanks and congratulations to His Highness, Her Highness and their Dewan, in terms of this *mantra* I am obliged also to say that this Proclamation is a tardy carrying out of the behest contained in this verse of the *Ishopanishad* that I have recited. Only yesterday we were unfit to call ourselves Hindus. For if all that there is in the Universe is pervaded by God, that is to say if the Brahman and the Bhangi, the learned man and the scavenger, the Ezhava and the Pariah, no matter what caste they belong to—

if all these are pervaded by Lord God, in the light of this *mantra*, there is none that is high and none that is low, all are absolutely equal, equal because all are the creatures of that Creator. And this is not a philosophical thing to be dished out for Brahmans or Kshatriyas, but it enunciates an eternal. truth which admits of no reduction, no palliation. Therefore the Maharajah himself and the Maharani are not one whit superior to the lowliest being in Travancore. We are all creatures and servants of one God. If the Maharajah is the first among equals, as he is, he is so not by right of overlordship but by right of service. And, therefore, how nice, how noble it is that every Maharajah is called 'Padmanabhadas'! It is a proud title, and I congratulate those who bestowed that title on the Maharajah of Travancore. Therefore when I told you that the Maharajah or the Maharani were not one whit superior to any one of us, I told you what was the actual truth accepted by their Highnesses themselves. And if that is so, how can anyone here dare to arrogate superiority to himself or herself over any other human being? I tell you, therefore, that if this *mantra* holds good, if there is any man or woman here who believes that the temples are defiled by those called Avarnas, that person I declare would be guilty of a grave sin. I tell you that the Proclamation has purified our temples of the taint that had attached to them.

I would like the *mantra* I have recited to be enshrined in the hearts of all our men and women and children, and if this contains, as I hold, the

essence of Hinduism, it should be inscribed on the portals of every temple. Don't you then think that we should be belying that *mantra* at every step if we excluded anyone from those temples? Therefore, if you will prove yourselves deserving of the gracious Proclamation and if you will be loyal to yourselves and to those who preside over your destinies, you will carry out the letter and spirit of this Proclamation. I regard it as such a great spiritual act that it ought to remove scepticism from the hearts of sceptics or doubts from the hearts of those who doubted the truth of Hinduism or Religion itself. Rightly understood this Proclamation should dispel the ignorant atheism of so-called atheists. From the date of the Proclamation the Travancore temples, which as I once said were not abodes of God, have become abodes of God, since no one who used to be regarded as untouchable is any more to be excluded from them. I therefore hope and pray that throughout Travancore there may be no man or woman who will abstain from going to the temples for the reason that they have been opened to those who were regarded as Pariahs of society.

SHERTHALAI

(18-1-37)

[A special Proclamation Celebration Session of the S. N. D. P. Yogam, the principal Ezhava organisation, was held at Sherthalai. Gandhiji addressed this session which was attended by thousands of Ezhavas.]

Proclamation—A Divine Gift

It is a matter of the greatest pleasure to me to be in your midst this afternoon. It is unnecessary for me now to say that I associate myself entirely in the expression of gratefulness to the Maharajah of Travancore. There can be no doubt that but for his solicitude for the faith of his ancestors and but for the wise guidance of Her Highness the Maharani and the able assistance of Sachivottama Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar, we should not have seen this Proclamation. But I would like to repeat to you what I have said on other occasions that if the hand that traced the signature to the Proclamation was that of the Maharajah, the spirit which actuated the hand to sign the Proclamation was that of God. In spite of the brave guidance of his wise mother, the youthful ruler of Travancore might well have quailed before taking the unprecedented step of removing, by one stroke of the pen, untouchability which was double-distilled in Travancore. *But whilst many things are impossible for mere man, nothing is impossible for God.* And in pursuance of the divine voice within, the Maharajah bravely took up the pen and

signed the Proclamation which was drafted for him by the Sachivottama. I would like you to look on the Proclamation as a divine gift and therefore respond to it in the spirit in which it has been given to you.

A Universal Law

My interpretation of the Proclamation is that it removes the age-long, and yet irreligious, distinction of high and low. There is before God, whose creatures we are all, absolute equality of all. It is man who in his arrogance has disturbed the even justice of his great Deity. The Maharajah has now removed the taint of untouchability and declared once for all to all his subjects that all have equal rights in the matter of temple entry, and it follows that if they have equality in the matter of temple entry, they should have equality in all other matters of life. And as I have begun to say for the last two or three days, the Proclamation is wholly consistent with the essence of Hinduism which is very briefly, but equally brilliantly, given in the first *mantra* of *Ishopanishad*. I commend that Upanishad, or at least its first *mantra,* to the attention of every one of you here. I will give you only a free translation of that *mantra*. It means this: God the Ruler and Creator pervades everything that is in the Universe down to the tiniest atom. There is nothing, without a single exception, where God is not. And naturally therefrom follows what the seer has said in the other part of this *mantra*, viz. Dedicate all at the feet of the Almighty or, in the

language of the Gita, renounce everything. But renunciation cannot, must not, mean suicide. Therefore, the Rishi or the seer says in the same breath, renounce or dedicate and then use or enjoy. But he felt that he had still not given the whole essence so that even a small child could understand it. Therefore, he wound up by saying: "Do not covet anybody's riches." Therefore your use and enjoyment is limited in two ways. The first condition is that we should consider nothing, not even our bodies, as our own, because we have got to dedicate or surrender everything to God the Ruler. The second condition is that we must not steal what belongs to others. That does not mean that we will not merely physically help ourselves to what belongs to our neighbours, but that we will not even cast hungry eyes on it. If we really want to enjoy the things we eat or the clothes we wear or the houses we live in, we must make up our minds definitely that these things are not more than we need for our sustenance and for the praise of our Maker. Then as creatures or children of God we realise that what we eat or clothe ourselves with or live in, does not belong to us but to God. And this advice is not given to a few chosen creatures of God, but to everyone in the world. You will see that the dominant part of the *mantra* is that every atom is pervaded by God. Therefore, the advice as to the renunciation or dedication or surrender is given to all his creatures. It is, therefore, not as if it was a command given to a few people, but the enunciation of a universal

law or universal truth. Just imagine if all of us were to live faithfully in accordance with the great law of our being, what a happy world it would be in which we should be living. Then there would be no mutual jealousies, no mutual strife. And those who are blessed, if I might say so, with certain possessions would constitute themselves trustees for such of those as might want them. In virtue of the law that I have endeavoured to explain to you, those who have much possession will use it only to the extent of their own limited requirements. And evidently because the traditions among the Maharajahs of Travancore is that they are to constitute themselves servants of Padmanabha, the practice that is in vogue today is that the Maharajah goes to the temple and dedicates himself to the Deity and as His agent and viceroy takes definite instructions to conduct his affairs from day to day. It is perfectly true that these instructions are not given and taken as from man to man, but even as I suggested to you that it was the spirit of God which moved the Maharajah to take this action, similarly if he goes to the temple for instructions in a spirit of prayer and humility, he clothes himself with the spirit of God. I do not want, therefore, to deceive myself or you into a false belief or superstition. Far be it from me to suggest that the Maharajah is an infallible being or that he never commits any error of judgment. I do not know what errors of judgment he has committed if any, but assuming that he is a mortal being and like any one of us liable to commit

errors of judgment, the fact is that he has got to live up to this *mantra*, and had it is recognised in the blue blood of Travancore that tradition requires the Maharajah from day to day to perform this act of dedication, and to the extent that he does so his acts must become infallible. Whatever may be the fact about the acts of the Maharajah, I have used the thing as an illustration to show how this law operates with us in India. Consciously or unconsciously, however imperfectly, it must express itself in our acts and our lives. Your temple-going means that and nothing else or nothing less. If you approach the temples in that spirit, you will renew yourself day by day as you go to the temples. And hitherto a large part of the Hindus who were deprived of the opportunities of daily surrender and dedication will get that opportunity. The Proclamation has now removed this very great and serious discrepancy or defect.

Raise the Lowest to Your Level

You have done right in rejoicing over this Proclamation. It was undoubtedly your duty to tender your loyal congratulations to their Highnesses, but that is merely the beginning of your response to the Proclamation. You must now realise the fullest significance and implication of this Proclamation. You have to make a spiritual use of the opportunity given to you, and I assure you if you realise the deep spirituality of this Proclamation everything else will follow from it as day follows night. The winter of your despair is over, the spring of your hope is now in front of you, and if

you will really blossom forth and fully enjoy the fruits of the Proclamation, you will not sit idle but you will live up to the meaning I have given you of the first *mantra* of *Ishopanishad,* and what is equally important is that you will take the message of hope to those who do not even realise what the Proclamation means. Heaven knows there may be thousands who do not realise this. It is your duty to take the message to those less fortunate than you are. Whatever you may have done in the past, I do hope you will not commit the fatal mistake of making any distinction between Ezhava and Pulaya and Paraya, but you will resolutely make up your minds to think and act in such a manner that you will raise them to the same common platform.

I want you to believe me when I tell you that the essence of Hinduism is contained in the single *mantra* which I have given you. I want you to believe me when I tell you that anything that is inconsistent with the meaning of that *mantra* is not Hinduism. It does not matter in the least what other things inconsistent with the *mantra* are to be found in what is known as Hinduism. I suggest to you that if you believe in this *mantra*, it ought to satisfy your highest aspirations.

The last time when I passed through Cochin and Travancore, I had the pleasure of meeting several Ezhava friends. Many of them were very bitter against Hinduism and Hindus. They took pride in describing themselves as atheists and not Hindus. They were prepared to burn the books which passed under the name of Hindu scriptures.

I know that this Proclamation has steadied those unbelievers. I sympathised with them at that moment as those who discussed with me will bear testimony. They could not help being bitter and atheistic when they believed that it was the hand of the Savarna that was held against the reform. They were bound to take the Savarna belief and conduct as a correct expression of the true Hindu belief, but now they know that the Savarna's heart is changed. Therefore, in passing through so many places in Travancore I have found no opposition among Savarnas. I have met during this tour tens of thousands of people and I have not known any distinction being made between man and man. If these crowds contained thousands of erstwhile untouchables they also contained thousands of so-called Savarnas. But assume for one moment that the Savarna's heart is not changed. *Our religion ought to be totally independent of the conduct of other people towards us.* For its source is derived from God within, and if we will be true to our God, we will never forsake the faith we derive from him. With God as our Guide, Master, Ruler in everything that we do, we may defy the whole world's opposition and stick to our faith. And I dare say that the *mantra* whose meaning I have given you is calculated to satisfy the highest aspiration of any being on earth. May it satisfy your aspiration also and may God give you the strength to live up to it. I thank you.

VAIKAM

(18-1-37)

[Vaikam, made famous throughout India by the Satyagraha, has one of the most ancient temples in Travancore, the image of Shiva being believed to be consecrated by Saint Vyaghrapada. Thousands lined the streets to the Satyagraha Camp and the temple, standing in exemplary order and silence, and over twentyfive thousand people listened to Gandhiji on the old Satyagraha Ashram ground in perfect silence.]

Those Who Fought and Died

I suppose you can better imagine than I can describe my joy for being a second time in your midst and under such happy auspices as you all know. Only a few years ago one had to struggle hard to get the roads leading to the great temple thrown open to Avarna Hindus. Good Madhavan assisted by Krishnaswami of revered memory and by Kelappan laid the foundation of that struggle. It is a matter of deep sorrow to me — as it must be to you — that neither Madhavan nor Krishnaswami is here to share your rejoicings.

A Call to Purification

Now I am on a pilgrimage, as I have called the present tour of Travancore. Throughout the whole course of my life I do not remember having entered so many temples as I have during these few days of pilgrimage, and only an hour more and I shall have the privilege of entering the

forbidding-looking walls, as they then were, which surround the great temple of this place. And all these good things have come to pass because the Maharajah and the Maharani resolved to carry out the sacred resolve under the inspiration of Padmanabhaswami. But the Proclamation can be rendered fully ineffective if the Savarnas and Avarnas of Travancore do not make an adequate response to this Proclamation. It is not enough that the Savarnas and the Avarnas continue to go to the temples just as they are doing now. Hitherto people have gone to the temples more by way of formality than from conviction. They had not reasoned out for themselves why they needed to go to the temples. Largely throughout India the temples have been popular more with women than men, and they have gone there in order to ask some boon of the God residing in those temples. But now if you have rightly understood the Proclamation and all it means, I expect much more from you than a mere formal going to the temples. In my opinion the Proclamation is a call to purification addressed to every Hindu in Travancore, whether Savarna or Avarna. It was the Savarnas who for a thousand years—may be several thousand years—had deprived their own fellow-religionists of the right of worshipping the same God in the same manner in which they worshipped. And in order to justify such an atrocious injustice — no matter for what causes — a whole class of human beings were held as untouchables. Now that the sinful distinction has been abolished by a stroke of the pen, in order

that you may render some reparation to Avarna Hindus, you have got to adopt some measure to let them know that you are no longer the superior beings that you have claimed to be all these years. Therefore I would expect all Savarnas to take the glorious message of liberation to every Avarna home. It can be done very easily and without much effort on your part. Only one condition is indispensable. You should believe from the bottom of your heart in the necessity of the Proclamation, and every Hindu—Savarna and Avarna, man and woman—should make it his or her individual work to get hold of some Avarnas, to take to them the message of the Proclamation, and take them to the temples. And since the spiritual regeneration of an individual or a nation must include all the departments of life — economic, religious, social —, uplift in those departments is bound to follow. You will be vastly mistaken if you labour under the delusion that all these things are going to be done by the Proclamation.

A Historical Fact

I think that the Maharajah's and the Maharani's task is finished, so far as untouchability is concerned, by issuing this Proclamation. That there would be financial aid by the State for the education of these classes is a foregone conclusion. But that can never bring about the regeneration that I am picturing to myself. That requires a hearty and willing co-operation of the Savarna Hindus as a class. You can therefore understand my sorrow when I heard — I do not know with

what truth—that some women and even men were hesitating to enter the temple as they used to do regularly. In order to disabuse such doubters, if there are any here, of their doubts I want to quote one historical fact that took place when I was here in connection with the Vaikam Satyagraha. Some of you may remember that I had more than one serious discussion with the shastris who were then residing within the temple precincts, and who were attached, if I remember rightly, to the temple in some shape or other. I am trying to give you as correct a version of that discussion as I can recall at the present moment. In support of the proposition that even roads leading to the temples were barred against Avarna Hindus although they were not barred against non-Hindus, they produced a book called Shankara Smriti. I had never heard of such a Smriti before I came to Vaikam and heard it quoted. You will be astonished to find that when I had that Smriti translated for me, I could not find in it any authority for closing the roads. But I grant that it was enough for them that they believed that the Shankara Smriti supported their contention. Then, as I was negotiating through the then Commissioner of Police and with the Senior Maharani, I just asked the question that supposing as a result of the negotiations the Maharani issued orders to open the roads to the Avarna Hindus, what would be their attitude to them? Then without the slightest hesitation they said: 'Oh! that is a different thing altogether; a Hindu Prince or Princess has every right to issue an order which has the

authority of a Smriti!' They said that was implied in Hinduism as Hindu kings are repositories of Hindu faith and they have every right to issue orders which are not inconsistent with Shruti. I asked them whether the same thing applied to the opening of the temples. They said, 'Most decidedly.' Let me tell you that these shastris were not the only shastris that gave this reply. I asked the same question to shastris in Cochin and Tamilnad and they gave the same answer. As a matter of fact that is the historical evolution of Smritis and for that matter of the eighteen Puranas. They were all produced or inspired in response to the want of those times. They do not always express eternal verities. The eternal verity is summed up in one verse of the *Ishopanishad* as I have been saying. And without fear of contradiction I am here to say that every believer in this verse is wholly a Hindu, and if he acts up to what is taught by this *mantra* he will find his freedom here and hereafter. I know no other road or better road to happiness than is contained in this first *mantra* of *Ishopanishad*. And if a Hindu Prince, in conformity with the implications and teachings of this *mantra*, issued a proclamation such as has been issued by the Maharajah of Travancore, it would carry such authority. And I invite those who know anything of the *Ishopanishad* to tell me whether this Proclamation is in any way inconsistent with this *mantra*. If they will make a prayerful search within and examine it, they will find that the Proclamation is a tardy fulfilment of its requirements.

Therefore with all the earnestness that I can command I want to ask every doubter—man and woman — to throw away those doubts and heartily respond to the Proclamation. I must not take this theme any further, as I want to introduce another subject. I shall conclude this part by hoping that the Proclamation will have your hearty, not lukewarm, support and that you will carry it out in letter and spirit.

An Appeal to the Cochin Maharajah

And now I want to take you all on the wings of your imagination to Cochin. I have come to the borders of Cochin, as far as it was possible, and I understand on the other side of the waters at a distance of less than ten miles lies Cochin. I suppose the last time I came to Vaikam I came through Cochin. But since I am not going to Cochin, I may permit myself to refer to Cochin which is so intimately connected with Travancore. Conditions in both the States are identical and the practices and usages in the two States are the same. I understand that the Maharajah of Cochin has even some rights and privileges with regard to the Vaikam temple. I must confess to you that I am impatient to see that the Cochin Maharajah follows in the footsteps of the Maharajah of Travancore. I have no desire whatsoever to embarrass His Highness. I am myself an old man — awaiting any day the warrant of *Yamaraja*. The Maharajah is older than I by six years. I assure you that whilst I am overjoyed over the Proclamation and the celebrations in

Travancore, I am oppressed by the responsibility which touches every Savarna Hindu — not that it devolves any the less on the devoted heads of Avarna Hindus. Only just now what I want to be done has got to be done, and can only be done, by the Savarna Hindus. I want you to adopt a respectful and prayerful attitude towards the old Maharajah of Cochin. But with due regard to his age and rank, we should be false to the faith we hold in common with him, we should be false to truth, if we did not convey to him our deepest wishes. I claim to have understood the tenets of Hinduism and for an unbroken period of 50 years followed them as far as an imperfect being like me can. And when I have repeated from every platform that untouchability is a blot on Hinduism I have weighed every word of it and I have based my opposition to untouchability on the Hindu shastras and nothing else. Therefore I venture to convey to the Maharajah of Cochin that what the Maharajah of Travancore guided by his mother has done is no new-fangled venture of a youthful sovereign. I verily believe that when all else about Travancore is forgotten, this one act of the Maharajah will be remembered by future generations with gratitude. I hold that this Proclamation must not begin and end with the border of Travancore.

Touch His Heart

Then let me give you a little tip. I want you to be at Cochin in imagination. That means that your conduct should affect the decision of the Maharajah of Cochin. How can this be done? By prayerful and religious spirit, as expressed

in your own individual conduct, you can influence His Highness. I do not suggest sending petitions to the Maharajah of Cochin. Petitions may be submitted by the people of Cochin, but you the people of Travancore can do something better. Old men are never moved from their purpose by appeals to the intellect. I tell you there are many young men after me to convert me to their views, and they find that they cannot easily take me with them. But the hearts of old men become increasingly responsive with age, and so whenever young men or young women want me to do anything they have to get round not my intellect or reason but my heart. So also must it happen to the old Maharajah of Cochin, and you can touch his heart, not through any newspaper propaganda, but by becoming better Hindus under the liberties granted by the Proclamation, by showing that you Savarna Hindus have not lost a tittle of your religious fervour, nor have the temples a tittle of the sanctity attached to them, by the readmission of Avarnas to them.

I have so often said and certainly held the belief that our temples were losing their sanctity by reason of our criminal neglect of our untouchable brethren. If you realize your responsibility under the Proclamation, you will, at once think with me that you cannot be indifferent to what temples mean to you and whether you go there or not. And when the best of you continue to go to the temples and see to it that temples undergo a process of regeneration and the life of the

Avarnas becomes purified, no Maharajah can help being moved by such a spectacle. I tell you if you have really understood the spirit of the Proclamation, the silent revolution that the Hindu life will undergo in Travancore will be irresistible and will overtake not only Cochin but every corner of Hindustan.

May God grant that even as the foundation of temple entry in Travancore was laid in this place by humble workers like Madhavan and the late Krishnaswami and Kelappan, may God grant that you people of Vaikam will lay the foundation of the purification of Hinduism, and thus induce the Maharajah of Cochin to open all the temples in his State and thus render an equally great service to Hinduism with the Maharajah of Travancore.

ETAMANOOR

(19-1-37)

Age of Miracles Not Gone

I am deeply grateful to you for your beautifully worded Sanskrit address and the gift of the bark tree cloth. I cannot say that I am going to wear this cloth. For one thing it is too dear for me to wear, but it will adorn the museum that we have set up in Maganwadi containing specimens of village crafts.

As I was being taken round the temple and as I approached the centre part of the temple, I had a Pulaya boy shown to me, and he boldly mounted up the steps with me. A few months ago, I should not have considered such a thing possible in my lifetime, but what often is impossible for man is easily possible for God to fulfil. And as I said last night and have repeated at several meetings, I see in this Proclamation the spirit of God working through the hand of the Maharajah. As a man, however, highly placed he was, he could not have possibly worked the wonders that I see about me in Travancore. If he was a perfect autocrat, heedless of the feelings of his people he could have issued this Proclamation, but he could by that act no more have touched your hearts than I could have by sending this Proclamation to you. He could not have made tens of thousands of Savarnas brush shoulders with the so-called Avarnas and go to the temples in a prayerful

mood. For this change of heart—for I cannot call this thing by any other name—only God is responsible. Was I not here only a few years ago and did I not see the hardened features of thousands of people whom I could not move from the citadel of untouchability? That citadel at that time seemed to me to be harder than the hardest steel. And had I not a living faith in God, I should have despaired of having your hearts ever being touched. But evidently the age of miracles is not gone. And I see today those very hard hearts having melted. I met last night a Nambudiri shastri, intimately connected with the Vaikam temple, who, as I saw during our conversation, was the old friend with whom I had discussions during the Temple Entry Satyagraha at Vaikam. And I asked him whether he could confirm the conversation between him and me which took place then and which I recalled during my speech last evening. Well, in a few years' time, that old man's heart has melted like snow under the Travancore Sun, and he and I instead of finding ourselves in opposite camps found ourselves last night congratulating the Government upon the Proclamation.

Wanted a Heartfelt Acceptance

But congratulations are not enough. It would be monstrous if you had not tendered congratulations to both the Maharajah and the Maharani. It is not enough that on an occasion like this thousands of you gather together and without any distinction go to the temple. This expression of

joy, this meeting of Savarnas' and Avarnas' hearts must not be a matter of momentary enthusiasm. The process must be continued with redoubled vigour so that nobody would have the misfortune of describing Travancore as a land possessing unapproachables, invisibles and what not. The literature dealing with Pulaya and Pariah should be a thing of the past, to be recalled, if it is ever to be recalled, as relics of the past. And I assure you that this Proclamation will fail of its purpose, if this change is not brought about in every department of life. The Maharajah and the Maharani have done their task. It is now reserved for you, the Savarna men and women of Travancore, to go down to them whom we have persecuted as the outcastes of society, to fraternize with them and own them as members of our families. It must be heart-felt, real, genuine acceptance, without mental reservation, of the Proclamation. It must not be allowed to become a dead letter. It is not meant to be a dead letter. From the heart to heart conversations that I had the privilege of having with the Maharani and the Maharajah and the Dewan, I know they wanted it to be given full effect to. Take this, therefore, as an honest and herculean effort to purify Hinduism. That process of purification is no one man's concern. It is the individual concern of every one of you here. May God give you enough strength for fulfilling the purpose behind the Proclamation.

KUMARANELLOOR

(19-1-37)

[Kumaranelloor has an ancient temple said to be about two thousand years old. It is a private Nambudiri temple situated in the heart of a thickly populated Nambudiri locality. Gandhiji was specially invited by the Nambudiri trustee of the temple to visit it along with a party of Pulayas and Pariah.]

A Unique Phenomenon

There is a special joy that I am experiencing this morning having come to this temple and having seen what I have seen. I was duly prepared for this upliftment. I was told that this was one of the oldest and most important of private temples, that it was the sole property of Nambudiris, and that when this temple was declared open, people thought that there remained nothing now to be done in connection with temple entry. But when I came here and saw what I did see, the joy which was reserved for me was considerably enhanced. Here behind me is the trustee of the temple who took me to the temple with great affection. For this I was not unprepared, because it has been my rare good fortune to experience that personal affection throughout this pilgrimage. But what gladdened my heart was to see that he invited the so-called Avarnas to come and enter the gates before he took me. And it did not appear to me an artificial act, but perfectly natural. Nowhere else has it happened like that during these seven days of my pilgrimage.

Of course I do not notice the omission anywhere, for the so-called Avarnas, or as I call them by the term of endearment 'Harijans', mixed freely with the others, and there was nothing more required by way of coaxing them to go into the temples. But it was most striking for me to observe that here our friend the trustee would not be satisfied until he drew the hesitating Avarnas and brought them to my notice. I felt then that this was really the proper manner of giving effect to the Proclamation. The Proclamation does not say that the hitherto proud Nambudiris should take Avarnas by their arms and give them the place of preference in the temples. Of course I own that the spirit of the Proclamation demands what this friend has done this morning, but then no prince can possibly dictate to the hearts of his people. All responses from the heart must be in their very nature spontaneous, and in this, for him, very natural act of expression of brotherhood I saw a proper fulfilment of the spirit of the Proclamation. My joy was further enhanced by my knowledge that Nambudiris occupy in this State, as in Cochin, a place of pride and privilege. If they even showed secret sullen opposition to the Proclamation, it could be rendered ineffective. But here in this private temple, the stronghold of orthodox Nambudiris, the Proclamation is evidently being carried out both in letter and spirit.

May You Be Liberators of Hinduism

I must here tell you a little secret. I tell you that I was most disinclined to visit Travancore and it required much effort on the part of

Sjts. Govindan and Ramachandran to draw me out of Segaon, and at one time it seemed as though all their labours would be in vain. But things happened to melt my heart and I am being led, as a docile man or woman may be led, by the nose by Ramachandran and company. But the heartening experience that I have undergone here tells me that it would have been a stupid act of foolishness on my part if I had not visited Travancore, if only to see this temple and to see Harijans being led into it. Let this be an example to all Nambudiris and other Savarnas to follow. That is a very fair illustration of what I mean when I say at so many meetings that the Proclamation is to be carried out in its full effect by the Savarnas. You must know that the Avarna Hindus, except those who have undergone training, do not know what the Proclamation is and what it means for them. The burden of drawing them out of the ghettoes, to which our ignorance and folly have confined them, and let them see the sunlight which is meant for all, and let their hearts be warmed up by being led to the temples,-lies on the Savarnas. Let it not be said of Travancoreans that what Nambudiris who are supposed to be the highest caste in Travancore did, others failed to do. This burden of drawing the Avarna brethren and sisters out of their dens depends no less on Savarna women than on men. I do hope and pray that all Savarna Hindus of Travancore will carry out the Proclamation to the fullest extent and deserve to be called the liberators of Hinduism, if not its saviours.

THIRUVARPPU

(19-1-37)

[This is a place which was the scene of Satyagraha and beatings by the police. We reached this small village by boat. Both the banks of the canal were studded with men, women and children. As our boat passed along, a number of joy boats followed us, and thousands had gathered at the temple which Gandhiji visited along with a number of Pulayas and Pariahs. A gentleman of the place distributed khadi to a number of these poor Harijans. It gave Gandhiji the greatest joy to distribute these pieces of khadi to half-naked men, women and children who perhaps had never in their lives before had come within the shadow of the temple.]

A Charter of Freedom

I am told that this place was the scene of Satyagraha and suffering. Whatever sufferings were gone through can be recalled with pleasure, now that the Proclamation has brought delight which the Satyagrahis had not expected at the time they were going through suffering. I have no time today to give you a long speech nor do you need a long speech from me. All I had to say, all I could say, has been mostly said already, but this I cannot help saying that if you are to reap the rich fruit of the Proclamation, *every one of you individually will have to work for it.* This Proclamation ought not be allowed to remain, as many rules and regulations are allowed to remain, in their portfolios. *This Proclamation is a charter of freedom to all Avarnas and it washes out the sins of Savarnas*

against Avarnas. But it can only wash out these sins, if the Savarnas realize the full significance of the Proclamation. Therefore the Savarnas should fraternize with the Avarnas, not for demonstrations but from their very hearts. You will then find that Travancore will be a place of pilgrimage for all the Hindus of India and it will also be a great landmark in the history of Hinduism. The burden of taking the message of Hinduism to everyone rests on the broad shoulders of Savarnas; and remember that you will fail to do so unless your hearts respond to the Proclamation. May God give you the wisdom and strength to do so.

KOTTAYAM

WOMEN'S MEETING

(19-1-37)

Speaking in Hindi Gandhiji said: I am delighted to address for the first time during my pilgrimage a women's meeting. I should therefore have given you much longer time and tried to make fuller acquaintance of you who have gathered together in such a large number and where, for the first time, a sister has made her reception speech in Hindi. I thank you both for the welcome and for the Hindi address. I shall rest content with saying a few words on the Proclamation. Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, who will speak to you after I have done, will address herself to women's problems as you may know that she is the Secretary of the All India Women's Conference.

I have often said that untouchability is a great blot on Hinduism and that it threatened the very life of Hinduism. The Proclamation has come in very good time to enable us to wipe out the blot. But by itself it cannot do so. The Maharajah's work was finished with the Proclamation. It is for you to root out untouchability by carrying the Proclamation into the full effect. This work of carrying through the process of purification devolves principally on Savarna Hindus. I have often said that it is women alone who can be protectors of religion inasmuch as they are the custodians of the purity of the people. It is

particularly women's work, because the purification of religion is ultimately a matter of the purification of one's heart. And if the women have realized the true spirit of the Proclamation, they can give better effect to it than men. We have up to now regarded Avarnas as untouchables, not only in our homes and our temples, but in our hearts. We have to regard them as our own kith and kin. If, therefore, there is anyone amongst you who thinks that the Maharajah has defiled the Hindu religion and the temples by issuing this Proclamation, she will err against humanity and her Maker. I must tell you that these temples were impure so long as the temple doors were closed against Harijans. This Proclamation has purified them all. None of you will, therefore, cease to go to these temples in the belief that they have been defiled. I hope that you will discard that superstition and fraternize with Harijan women and actively help in raising them to a level of social equality with you.

KOTTAYAM

(19 1–37)

[A mammoth gathering of Hindus and Christians listened to Gandhiji in exemplary silence, outside the great temple of the place.]

Stoop to Raise

I know that this great assemblage is one of the many signs of rejoicings over the Proclamation which H. H. the Maharajah has given to the people of Travancore. Whilst it was but natural and your duty to tender congratulations to their Highnesses and the Dewan, it would be wholly wrong if you exhausted your effort with these celebrations. Let your congratulations to their Highnesses be an earnest of your determination to make every effort to make the Proclamation as successful as human effort can make it. As I have suggested at various gatherings the main burden of successfully working out the Proclamation must fall on the shoulders of those who have been regarded as Savarnas. It is they who have to carry the message of liberation and hope to the desolate homes of those who are miscalled Avarnas. It is their privilege and their duty to approach the humble huts of the so-called Avarna brothers and sisters and take the message to them in a humble and prayerful mood. That would be some measure, however tardy, of reparation for wrongs done to those whom we have suppressed. It is and should be their proud privilege to stoop in

order to raise those whom they have helped to sink lower and lower from day to day. So much today for the Savarna Hindus.

Christians Must Help in Reparation

I know Kottayam is a stronghold of the Christians of Travancore. Christians know there is between them and me an invisible but unbreakable bond. I venture, therefore, to suggest to Indian Christians, whether they are born Christians or have been converted to Christianity, that they too may not stand aside but take part in advancing the cause that the Proclamation implies. And as briefly as possible I propose to tell you what I mean. That document abolishes all distinctions between high and low that reigned supreme in Travancore as in other parts of India. If a human document can raise by a stroke of the pen all Avarnas to the status of the Savarnas — and this Proclamation does really do so—then the Christians in the State owe a duty to the Hindus which they dare not neglect. If you believe with me, as I know a large body of Christian opinion today does believe, that all the principal religions of the world are true, then you will aid Savarna Hindus in the process of penitence and reparation they are expected to go through under the Proclamation.

My Grief

It undoubtedly grieved me when some of the Depressed Classes felt in disgust towards Hinduism like going out of Hinduism and embracing some other faith. It was a matter of equal grief to me

to hear of efforts made by people belonging to different faiths to catch, as it were, the Depressed Classes and remove them from the faith to which they have belonged for centuries. If you believe, as I know some do, that Hinduism is nothing but a body of hedious usages and superstitions, that Hinduism is a fraud upon humanity, then you cannot render better service to the Avarna and Savarna Hindus than by exposing this 'fraud'. In the estimation of those who so believe, this Proclamation is an act which it would be their duty to resist and to show to the Maharajah that by issuing the Proclamation of liberation he is simply prolonging the agony and giving a new lease of life to a body of superstitions which were bound to die their natural death. But I know many Christians throughout the length and breadth of India do not regard Hinduism as a fraud upon humanity or a body of bad usages and superstitions. A religion which has produced Ramakrishna, Chaitanya, Shankara and Vivekanand cannot be a body of superstitions. As you know, and if you do not know it I want to declare, that I personally hold all principal religions of the world to be not only true but also to be equal.

All-comprehensive Mantra

I have endeavoured to study the Bible with the eyes of a devout Christian and the Koran with the eyes of a devout Mussalman, and I have not hesitated to assimilate whatever I have found to be good in both these scriptures. I have studied other scriptures of the world also, but I

have singled these out for the sake of illustration. But, you might well ask, If I declare all these religions to be equally true and equally demanding my respect, what is the meaning of my remaining a Hindu? I shall tell you why. Latterly I have been endeavouring to describe to vast assemblages of men and women I have addressed what I regard as the essence of Hinduism, and I have been suggesting to them one incredibly simple *mantra* of the *Ishopanishad,* and as you know it is one of the Upanishads that enjoy the sanctity of the Vedas. The very first verse of the *Ishopanishad* means simply this: God pervades everything that is to be found in this universe down to the tiniest atom. The *mantra* describes God as the Creator, the Ruler, and the Lord. The seer to whom this *mantra* or verse was revealed was not satisfied with the magnificent statement that God was to be found everywhere. But he went further and said: 'Since God pervades everything nothing belongs to you, not even your own body. God is the undisputed, unchallengeable Master of everything you possess.' And so when a person who calls himself a Hindu goes through the process of regeneration or a second birth, as Christians would call it, he has to perform a dedication or renunciation of all that he has in ignorance called his own property. And then when he has performed this act of dedication or renunciation, he is told that he will win a reward in the shape of God taking good care of what he will require for food, clothing or housing. Therefore the condition of enjoyment or use of the necessaries of life is their

dedication or renunciation. And that dedication or renunciation has got to be done from day to day, lest we may in this busy world forget the central fact of life. And to crown all, the seer says: 'Covet not anybody's riches.' I suggest to you that the truth that is embedded in this very short *mantra* is calculated to satisfy the highest cravings of every human being — whether they have reference to this world or to the next. I have in my search of the scriptures of the world found nothing to add to this *mantra*. Looking back upon all the little I have read of the scriptures — it is precious little I confess — I feel that everything good in all the scriptures is derived from this *mantra*. If it is universal brotherhood — not only brotherhood of all human beings, but of all living beings — I find it in this *mantra*. If it is unshakable faith in the Lord and Master — and all the adjectives you can think of — I find it in this *mantra*. If it is the idea of complete surrender to God and of the faith that He will supply all that I need, then again I say I find it in this *mantra*. Since He pervades every fibre of my being and of all of you, I derive from it the doctrine of equality of all creatures on earth and it should satisfy the cravings of all philosophical communists. This *mantra* tells me that I cannot hold as mine anything that belongs to God, and if my life and that of all who believe in this *mantra* has to be a life of perfect dedication, it follows that it will have to be a life of continual service of our fellow creatures.

This, I say, is my faith and should be the faith of all who call themselves Hindus. And I venture to suggest to my Christian and Mussalman friends that they will find nothing more in their scriptures if they will search them, and I want the aid of everybody on earth — whether he is a Christian or a Mussalman or what else — to help the Hindus of Travancore to realize the lofty purpose that lies in this *mantra*. I do not wish to hide from you the fact that I am not unaware of many superstitions that go under the name of Hinduism. I am most painfully conscious of all superstitions that are to be found masquerading as Hinduism, and I have no hesitation to call a spade a spade. I have not hesitated to describe untouchability as the greatest of these superstitions. But in spite of them all, I remain a Hindu. For I do not believe that these superstitions form part of Hinduism. The very canons of interpretation laid down by Hinduism teach me that whatever is inconsistent with the truth I have expounded to you and what is hidden in the *mantra* I have named, must be summarily rejected as not belonging to Hinduism. And I want you non-Hindus to help the so-called Savarna Hindus to spread this truth in the midst of those whom they have hitherto regarded as untouchables, unapproachables, invisibles.

An Appeal

I felt that I could not do justice to this great meeting, especially a meeting that is held in a Christian stronghold, unless I was prepared to utter a truth I held dear as life itself. We all

consciously or unconsciously pine and strive for peace on earth and goodwill amongst mankind. I am convinced that we shall find neither peace nor goodwill among men and women through strife among men of different religions, through disputation among them. We shall find truth and peace and goodwill if we approach the humblest of mankind in a prayerful spirit. Anyway that is my humble appeal to Christians who may be present in this great meeting. It is a privilege that may not occur again to any of you in your lifetime. As I have said so often elsewhere, whilst the hand that traced the signature on the Proclamation was that of the Maharajah, the spirit that moved him to do so was that of God. Would to God that that spirit might also fire everyone in Travancore to realize the implications of this Proclamation, and to fire every one of you to advance the cause that the Proclamation enunciates.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the exemplary silence with which you have listened to my speech.

CHANGANACHERI

(20-1-37)

[The temple here belonging to the Nambudiris was the first private temple in Travancore to be opened to the Harijans.]

Justify Your Assertions

It is the partiality of the President of the Travancore Harijan Sevak Sangh that has made it possible for you to read one of your addresses. I do not wonder at his partiality, because Changanacheri is his place. But, then I see that this address is an entrapping addresss, because if it really represents your views, the partiality of the President can be easily excused. This is the very comforting statement that you have made in your address: "Our religion has been purified." Then you proceed to say: "All social inequalities have been removed. Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man has been established, and we are in the happy land of *Ramarajya* in every sense of the term." Well, if I was an inhabitant of Changanacheri, and this address was read in my name and I had been asked to sign it, I should have to undergo various nights of vigils before I could subscribe to the statements therein. If you had rested content with saying that all these things had been implied in the Proclamation, of which you have spoken in enthusiastic terms, it would have been quite in place and I should have said that you were right in reading all these

implications in the Proclamation and that God might help you to live up to those implications. But you have with a due sense of responsibility gone forward to make the bold assertions I have read out to you. I know you have made them in pardonable enthusiasm. But now I would ask you to abide by your statements and prove the validity of the assertions made here by your worthy conduct. I should not wonder if you were to prove equal to the assertions you have made here, because as you have given me the information this is a Nambudiri stronghold and this a private Nambudiri temple that they have generously and whole-heartedly opened to the Harijans. The way to live up to every assertion is by every individual doing these very things in his or her own life, and I tell you that a life of spirituality truly lived is far more infectious than all the microbes put together can prove on this earth. And whereas we dread all these infections and would rather escape them, this is an infection which we would all welcome.

Let me hope and pray that all that you have said in this address may prove true in Travancore; and if it does so, I promise that it will prove true in the whole of India.

THIRUVALLA

(20-1-37)

[In reply to many addresses given at this place, Gandhiji said in a brief speech :]

Lest I should forget them, you have been good enough to remind me of my many virtues. If I had them, really they would have taken care of themselves without your reminding me of them. And I am none the wiser for having been reminded of them. But one thing you have omitted to do which was really necessary. After reminding me of my virtues, you have gone into rapture over the Proclamation, but you have failed to tell me what you propose to do with the Proclamation. As I have been telling at every meeting, it is not the Maharajah's work, it is the work of every man and woman in Travancore, to do his or her duty, *viz.* to go down to the dens of Harijans, pull them out of them and raise them to the same status and level that you occupy in society. Not till then will you have done your duty in terms of the Proclamation.

CHENGANOOR

(20-1-37)

[There were sights for the gods to see at the Tazhman Matham, a private Nambudiri temple of this place. Pulayas went right into the residential house and the temple situated in the midst of the house, Nambudiri ladies cast off their purdah and asked for Gandhiji's blessings.]

Convince Orthodoxy of Your Conversion

I am grateful to you for the address that you have given to me. Of course it is all very well for you to present me with the addresses. They have their value if they are properly coined and presented with the proper spirit behind them. When I say that they should be properly coined, I say that they should express the sentiment you really cherish. They should not contain fulsome praise of those whom you present the address, but what you have done or about to do should be stated therein for the information of the person whom you present the address. And today as the central theme of our rejoicing is the graceful Proclamation issued by the Maharajah, naturally you will express your aspirations and actions in terms of this Proclamation. And it does not matter in the least whether it is from the little children or from the Hindu public or the youth league. You have not really drafted your address in that way but that does not matter. I

am here to remind you of things that are expected of you not only by the Maharajah and the Maharani, but of the things that the whole of India expects you to do. At the present moment the whole of India is really dumbfounded. It does not know whether such a thing could happen in this age. Orthodoxy is shaken to its foundation. It trembles to think of the consequences, not in a spirit of hostility by any means, but it is no doubt filled with suspicion and amazement. It wonders whether untouchability was not after all a sin and a crime against humanity. Now I can tell you what can be the net result of this doubt having entered the orthodox mind. One of the results is bound to follow, and it will wholly depend upon the condition of the Savarna Hindus. The doubts of the orthodoxy will be dispelled like the morning mist at sunrise if the orthodoxy can really see that the Savarnas of Travancore have washed themselves of the sin of untouchability. On the contrary if they come to know or feel that you are not playing the game and that you are secretly harbouring untouchability in your hearts, then the orthodoxy will also harden their hearts. You will admit that such a result will be worse than that in which we are. Therefore let not the enthusiasm that I have seen vanish like smoke immediately these celebrations are over. On the contrary let it be said of you, Savarna Hindus, that you have harnessed the energy born of this enthusiasm for the purification of Hinduism. And I am flattering myself with the belief that I am leaving with you the golden key for the

solution of all the difficulties that may linger in your hearts. And that is to remember the first verse of the *Ishopanishad* and forget all about other scriptures. You can really drown yourself and be suffocated in the ocean of literature known as scriptures. They are good for the learned and the wise, for they will humbly approach them,' but I am sure that for the ordinary man in the street, they are nothing but a burden. It is not I who say these things, it is what those who wrote these scriptures have said. I shall therefore leave this meeting with a free translation of that *mantra.* It simply means this: "God pervades everything that we see." Therefore it is literally true what the Western science tells us that Nature abhors a vacuum, for there is nothing on earth where God is not. And if he occupies everything that is, there is nothing for us to occupy. Therefore, the *mantra* says, "you must renounce everything," but it does not say "renounce everything and perish." On the contrary it says, "renounce everything if you want to live." For that act of renunciation or dedication to God will result in God taking the responsibility of feeding you, of housing you, and of clothing you. And then the *mantra* closes with this beautiful advice or injuction — "do not covet anybody's riches." That does not mean that you must not take away these addresses from me. But it means that your eyes must be single and pure, otherwise you would be criminal. There never was anything yours nor could be. That applies to all our organs, and if you follow what I say, action in terms of the

Proclamation will be easy. If you understand this formula of Hinduism—this distilled wisdom of all the sages that lived—you will go and fraternise with Harijans, pull them out of their dens and raise them to the same social level that you enjoy.

ARANMULLA

(20-1-37)

[I have described the scene of the meeting in one of the chapters in the book.]

What It Means to Be a Hindu?

The scene at this meeting is a visible demonstration of the fact that what I am just now doing is nothing but a pilgrimage. There is the river Pampa, there is the temple, and here are thousands of people gathered together to rejoice over the Proclamation. Such are the scenes which are witnessed during the progress of pilgrims all over India. But then, if pilgrimages are undoubtedly matters that furnish joy for the soul, they must at the same time continue to remind us that we should purify ourselves continually in order to satisfy our Maker. All the more so because of the gracious Proclamation that His Highness the Maharajah has given us.

I know that here we are all Harijans and non-Harijans united without the slightest distinction. It is well, if our hearts are also equally united. But if they are not united and we cherish all kinds of distinctions that have for ages past disfigured Hindu society, we are unworthy of that great Proclamation. Great is the responsibility that lies upon the shoulders of those who hitherto regarded themselves as belonging to the superior castes. The Proclamation invites such people to

descend from the pedestal which they have occupied with no credit but with utter discredit to themselves and the faith which they have hopelessly misrepresented. Let me therefore hope and pray that all who have been called Savarna Hindus will make the determination to get rid of untouchability from their hearts and make common cause with those whom they have suppressed for ages.

I must, as the pilgrimage is about to finish, put before you for your consideration and assimilation the *Ishopanishad* which I have been doing for the last four or five days. Let that *mantra* be your guide and your inspiration in everything you do. Its meaning can be understood by even a little child and it is this: "God pervades the tiniest atom in this mighty universe, and seeing that He is the Sole Ruler and Indispensable Master of everything that can be conceived and that there is in this universe, we are called upon to dedicate everything to Him. In our ignorance we have fancied that so many things belong to us and that we possess them to the exclusion of everybody else. So long as we entertain such a belief, we are not really Hindus, though being born of Hindu parents we may call ourselves Hindus. Therefore, to be truly, deliberately and consciously Hindus, we have got to act according to this key *mantra* of all Upanishadas and the whole of Hinduism, and renounce everything, even our body, and all that we hold dear and near to us, and dedicate it at the feet of God. Then the *mantra* says: "If you do this, but not otherwise,

God will give you your daily bread, a house to live in and clothes to cover your limbs with." And it proceeds further by saying that since God is all-powerful and nothing is impossible for Him and since you have surrendered everything to Him, He is not going to neglect you. And hence you shall not covet anything that belongs to others, even a needle.

Now you can easily understand that in the presence of God, the Ruler of the Universe, who pervades everything—even those whom we have called the lowest of the low—all are equal. So you will see how necessary it was for His Highness to issue this Proclamation, for he was to make good his title to be called a Hindu prince.

Now as I leave you I would like to leave this *mantra* with you, and if anybody challenges you and says anything in the name of Hinduism which is contrary to this *mantra*, you can tell him that you know everything about Hinduism and everything contrary to it is not Hinduism.

ELANTHOOR

(20-1-37)

The Implication of the Proclamation

This is a typical village. I tender you my congratulations for having of your own initiative got rid of untouchability even before the issue of the Proclamation. The Proclamation now sets the seal of approval upon your work and makes your work acceptable to the whole of Travancore. Now if your village has been as advanced as you claim it to be in this address, I would expect marvellous results in virtue of this Proclamation. And I would tell you what I would expect you to do. It will not satisfy me—it ought not to satisfy you—that isolated Hindus calling themselves Savarnas mix with those whom they call Avarnas. I would now expect not only you, but the whole village, and all the surrounding villages, to forget all distinctions between Ezhavas, Pulayas, Pariahs and others, and that even in your hearts you do not harbour any such distinction. If you will do this, I will also expect that there will be no Harijans perishing for want of food or clothing or for want of opportunities for education. I would expect your schools to be attended by Harijans as much as by non-Harijans. I hope you will bring about this result in no time.

If this Proclamation has as if by magic changed the hearts of the so-called Savarnas, then you will not measure the progress of the so-called

Harijans—socially, morally, economically—in driblets. But the progress will be so phenomenal that it will be noticed by any observer in the way. In my opinion that is the implication of the Proclamation and nothing else. May I hope that you will live up to this implication?

PANDALAM

(20-1-37)

Divine Silence

Many glorious meetings I have had in Travancore have now accustomed me to meetings however large they may be and to what I may call pin-drop silence. It is a unique phenomenon that I have witnessed in this pilgrimage of mine. I have a vivid and happy recollection of meetings addressed in Travancore during my three previous visits. I will remember, they were very orderly and gave me great satisfaction. But somehow or other this being in my opinion a purely religious pilgrimage of a humble penitent I have been in need of perfect silence and I have been amply rewarded for my prayers.

At Kottayam I saw before me about this time last evening a vast assemblage of men and women whose number no one could calculate. It was a sea of human faces. I simply approached it in fear and trembling, because there was unfortunately no microphone arrangement there. The organisers had tried their best to make the arrangement, but they had failed. And yet, you will be pleased to learn from me that in that meeting, which was nearly ten times as large as this, there was wonderful silence for an hour or more. I was amazed at this absolutely unexpected silence and patience of thousands of men and women at this vast meeting. I am not mentioning these facts in order to satisfy idle curiosity or fill in the idle

moments. I mention this in order to emphasise the fact that *these meetings have a religious character*, and I hope I am not wrong that to infer from the behaviour of these vast crowds that they were fired within, perhaps unconsciously, by a religious spirit. Whatever may have been the cause of this divine silence that you have given me, I know that for me there can be no other meaning.

Act of Divinity

I have regarded this Proclamation as an act of divinity, though outwardly it is the act of a great prince. Any man, if possible even braver than the young Maharajah and his wise mother, would have quailed if he had reasoned out the pros and cons of the Proclamation of this character, and yet it was this young Maharajah who signed the Proclamation which was complete for the purpose for which it was intended. And therefore it is that I have often said that though it was his hand that put the signature to the Proclamation, the spirit behind was that of God working through the Maharajah. Having, therefore, looked at the Proclamation in that light, and having approached this pilgrimage in fear and trembling, I have pined for the opening out of your hearts. I have not made a conscious effort to make any appeal to your reason, but I have made a conscious effort to make an appeal to your hearts and penetrate them, and unless I have deluded myself I fancy that I have made some approaches to your hearts. Whether I have done so or not, I want to repeat what I have said at the previous meetings that the burden of carrying out the Proclamation in

letter and in spirit rests principally on Savarna Hindus. And the implication is emphatically this that the Savarna Hindus have to forget their wrong understanding of the message of Hinduism and the distinctions that they have up to now drawn between themselves and the Avarna Hindus. *The Proclamation emphatically means that untouchability, unapproachability and unseeability are all relics of the past* and that those Hindus who have arrogated superiority for themselves will forget that they were superior human beings and will remember that they are the children of the same God and that all Savarnas and Avarnas are equal. The Proclamation is addressed to every Hindu, and every one of you is expected to show that he has understood it and he has to carry it out in his day to day dealings with those whom he has hitherto regarded as Pariahs of society. I do not propose to carry on this appeal to the Savarna Hindus any further tonight.

The Maharajah had nothing to do beyond issuing the Proclamation. It was cent per cent truthful in so far as one would want to know his opinion in regard to untouchability. So far as I can see, there is nothing to amplify the Proclamation. Therefore, in your presence I propose to address a few words to His Highness, Her Highness and to their advisers.

An Appeal to Their Highnesses

Great as this Proclamation is and great as is its religious merit, greater still is the responsibility that His Highness has taken upon his shoulders, and so also his advisers. Whilst without the effort of every Savarna Hindu the

Proclamation can undoubtedly be rendered ineffective, I must also say that the Proclamation will not have its full effect unless it is backed in an ample measure by State action. So far as I can see the Proclamation demands State activities in all departments of life. Of these I propose to take the religious first; because from it must follow activities in all the other departments. Temples have been matters of indifference, except to women, who have no capital save divine faith, and to men who from many mixed motives have been going to them. They have been neglected by what may be called the intelligentsia. The result has been that they have almost ceased to be repositories of Hinduism and have ceased to impart spiritual power to those who have followed the faith. They have ceased to shed unmistakable spiritual fragrance in and about and around them. Then, I venture to suggest that it is the duty of the State,—or of the Maharajah, if there is any distinction between the two, for he is the custodian of the vast majority of Hindu temples —, that *he should see to it that the temples are renovated spiritually, and have the authority and sanctity that they used undoubtedly to have at one time.* And I believe that it can only be done if they are in charge of priests who know what they have to do, who know something of the sanctity of them, and of the duties to which they are called. In other words, they should not be ignorant people following their calling for a livelihood, but they should be men who are proud of

their privilege of bringing the message of God to temple-goers, showing by their own conduct and their life that these temples are abodes of divinity.

Render Them Abodes of Living God

Then there should be the correct kind of instruction, given in these temples. The Harijans will be taken by the hand by someone in charge of temples and they will be told what they are expected to gain by temple-worship. This means undoubtedly, according to modern thought, a revolution in the upkeep and conduct of these temples. But the Proclamation itself is nothing short of a revolutionary document, and if that revolution is to touch, as it ought to touch, the lives of all Hindus, naturally temples have to be abodes of the living God, and not abodes of a mere mass of gold or other metals worked into figures. Then I should expect a history of these temples, understandable by the common folk, to be distributed freely or at a cheap price to all who want to know what these temples are. That means a training school for training the right kind of teachers who will be entrusted with the religious training of the people. If some such thing does not happen, I fear that the purpose of the Proclamation, *viz.* to expect and to induce lakhs and lakhs of Harijans to go to these temples in a religious spirit, will fail.

Raise Avarnas' Status

So much for the religious department. Then I take the economic. The economic life of the Harijans has got to be lifted out of its miserable state. I venture to think that by a judicious and thoughtful working out of the programme, it can

be prosecuted in a short time and with a limited financial outlay, in such a manner that Harijans may be easily able to hold their own by being taught to turn an honest *chakram*. Nor can the State now dare neglect the mental training—I mean literary—of these people. I know to my cost that today it is very difficult to carry on a connected conversation with Pulayas and Pariahs so that you can get a ready response even about simple facts of life.

Similarly, the State has to raise the social status of these people. They should be invited to all State occasions and functions, as for instance Durbars. They must not be allowed to feel that these functions are a sealed book to them, and that they should have to have another agitation before they can attain a social status entitling them to be invited or allowed to take part in those functions. But if the Proclamation bears the meaning I have given to it, then the social uplift of the Harijans has to come as if by magic, as the religious status of going to the temples has come.

In my humble opinion, in suggesting this four-fold programme of the uplift of the Harijans in the State I have not suggested any programme beyond the capacity or resources of a State like Travancore.

People's Co-operation Essential

But having addressed these few words to the State in all humility, I want to come back to you. The State may resolve to do all these things, but its resolution will not mean the coming-in of man-power in order to carry out all these things. And if, from the few words I have addressed to Their Highnesses and their advisers, you think that

after all it is Their Highnesses who have to do everything and you have to do nothing, then I am afraid that my labours will have gone in vain. The requisite man-power has got to be supplied by you, and as a man of experience I will tell you that man-power cannot come by offers of money. Thus, for instance, men who are capable of taking the management of temples cannot be had by offering scholarships of hundreds of rupees. For such people have got to be fired by a religious spirit, by love of their own work, and should therefore be ready to work for a bare maintenance. It should be their proud privilege to take this training and to fit themselves for this highest task in life. Similarly, unless the State gets men required for giving Harijans educational training, the State can do nothing.

After all, there is a world of meaning about the title that the Maharajahs of Travancore have adopted for themselves, *viz*. Padmanabhadas. They pride themselves in calling themselves servants of God, but that means that they are also servants of their people. So, as I said at one of these meetings, the Maharajahs are not the first lords among the people of Travancore, but they are the first servants among the people who are also servants. But the first servants of the people will fare badly unless they are ably assisted by the people who are their fellow servants. Therefore the meaning of His Highness the Maharajah going to the temple every day and taking instructions as to his daily duties from Shri Padmanabhaswami means nothing less than that he should be assisted by his people for their own good—spiritual, religious, social, economic.

KOTTARAKARAI

(21-1-37)

[At Kottarakarai Gandhiji was invited to declare open a private temple belonging to Sjt. K. M. M. Narayan Nambudiripad to the Harijans. In declaring the temple open he said: "It is a matter of great joy to be invited to open this private temple. Our friend Sjt. K. M. M. Narayan Nambudiripad deserves the very best congratulations from me, and I hope you will associate yourselves with me in giving him congratulations for following the great example of His Highness the Maharajah. Thereby he is simply living up to the best traditions of Hinduism. He is therefore, by opening this and seventeen other temples belonging to him, rendering a distinct service in the process of purification of Hinduism. I have great pleasure in declaring the temple open." After this Gandhiji addressed the public meeting. This was the last meeting that he addressed during the pilgrimage.]

Carrying Away Spiritual Treasures

This is the very last stage of my pilgrimage in Travancore. I said elsewhere that I came here with great hesitation, equal reluctance, and in fear and trembling; and but for the very pressing and urgent wire of Sjt. Govindan you would not have seen me in your midst today. The telegrams were sent under the joint signatures of Sjt. Govindan and Sjt. Ramachandran, but Ramachandran being a child of Sabarmati, I might not have listened to him; but I dreaded the signature of an ex-judge of Travancore and, more than that, a

leader of the Ezhavas. And so at last very reluctantly I capitulated; but having done so, I am free to confess that I am very glad that I capitulated. I am taking away with me spiritual treasures of which I had not dreamt before. Your magnificent temples were as much closed against me, by a voluntary effort on my part, as they were against the tallest amongst the Ezhavas, Pulayas and Pariahs, who were until the other day despised by the Savarna Hindus. But having found the doors of these temples flung open by the very generous act of His Highness, I entered them with the same joy that must have been felt by the thousands of Ezhavas, Pulayas and Pariahs who must have gone to these temples since the Proclamation. After having entered responsible life, I cannot say that I ever was a habitual temple-goer. But the possibility for spiritual growth by entering these temples in a spiritual and devotional mood has dawned upon me after all these visits to these temples in a devotional and prayerful mood, as it had never before been opened to me. But, of course, one needs a proper attitude of mind before one can derive the highest consolation and spiritual joy from visiting these temples. As it is, I have just now come from having performed the opening ceremony of a private temple belonging to Sjt. K. M. M. Narayan Nambudiripad. The ceremony of opening this temple was equal to opening his other temples in Travancore, and I derived the keenst joy in the privilege to open this temple. I have opened several temples before now, but I cannot say that I had such joy in opening those temples.

I had missed in those temples the presence of God. There seemed to me to be a kind of artificiality about the opening of those temples. Here, on the contrary, wherever I have gone, I have seen a spontaneity that I was not prepared for. Nor was I prepared for thousands of people waiting for my entry in these temples. No doubt they had come in order to see what must have been to them a zoological specimen. But I am quite certain that that was not the sole motive in thousands of them coming here and standing in silent and absolutely devotional mood. A scoffer and a sceptic might be easily misled in saying that all this is a figment of my imagination, and has no correspondence to reality. But if such is really the case, I am here to tell you that the whole of my life and growth are due to such figments of imagination, and it would be true at least to say of me that I have needed these figments for my growth. And after all imagination is not such a despicable thing that you can neglect it altogether in mundane affairs of life.

Temples an Integral Part of Our Lives

Whatever it may be, I leave this word with you that if you will translate the Proclamation that His Highness the Maharajah guided by Padmanabhaswami has given you, you will have to identify yourselves completely with all and abolish the distinctions of high and low, Savarnas and Avarnas; and in order to assist you to do so, I want to translate for you the verse I have been putting before the people for the last four

or five days. The meaning of that verse is this: "God the Ruler, our Master and Lord, pervades everything in the universe down to the tiniest atom." It means that He is not merely in your heart or my heart but he is literally and absolutely in every one of the innumerable pores of our skin and the hairs of our head. And, therefore, He is nearer to you and to me than our dearest ones. Then the first essential of Hinduism is that we realise the truth of this magnificent statement as we realise that we are sitting here and you are listening to me. Having realised the truth, the seer proceeds to say that since God is so near to us and dominates all our actions, we must voluntarily renounce and dedicate at His feet all that we have regarded as our own. But even after that act of conscious and deliberate dedication and renunciation, we shall want to eat, clothe ourselves and house ourselves, and so the seer says you can only after this dedication use these necessaries of life as if they were given to you by God Himself. That requires the same trust, the same faith and the same love that a child without reasoning it out for himself has for his parents. He never reasons out for himself that it is all well with them and for him so long as his parents are there and so long as they continue to anticipate and supply his wants. Our parents are as much mortal as we ourselves, and therefore it is infinitly more logical and necessary for us that we should have as much faith in God to anticipate and supply our wants. And having told us these three things, the seer proceeds to warn us against coveting

anybody's possession. Now you will see that if we believe in this *mantra* — and every Hindu is bound to believe in this — there would be no distinctions like those which have been sapping the very foundation of Hinduism and Hindu society.

Now you can also at once realise why *temples are and must be an integral part of our lives.* We are so easily forgetful of our obligations that *we have to renew our vows of loyalty to God, to renew our renunciation and dedication from day to day.* These temples are the visible symbols of God's power and authority. They are, therefore, truly called the houses of God, the houses of prayer. We go there in a prayerful mood and perform, first thing in the morning after ablution, the act of dedication and surrender. Scoffers and sceptics may say that all these are figments of the imagination, that we are imagining God in the images we see. I will say to these scoffers that it is so. I am not ashamed of confessing that imagination is a powerful factor in life. The temple is not a house of God for, say, my cow, although the cow is as much my fellow-being as any human being. But God has not blessed the cow with imagination, and her presence in the temple has no effect on her, but my presence has a well-defined effect, because I have imagined that the particular temple contains the presence of God.

Therefore, I would love to leave this *mantra* with you and tell you that whatever is inconsistent with this *mantra*, you must summarily reject as not Hinduism; and having

assimilated all that there in this *mantra,* you need not worry about other books that pass by the name of Hindu scriptures. Far be it from me to suggest that all else is absolutely worthless or harmful. There are undoubtedly worthless things that pass current as Hindu shastras, but there are also priceless treasures hidden in these books. But you and I have not the time to study them, and even if you had the time, I would utter a word of caution to the effect that if a study of scriptures confuse your mind, it would be well to leave them alone and derive your comfort from this *mantra* to the exclusion of everything else.

And now with a brief reference to my happy experience in Travancore and courteous performance of the obligation that a visitor owes to his hosts, I shall close the proceedings.

Thanks to All

I and the whole of my company owe a deep debt of gratitude to the organisers of this pilgrimage who left no stone unturned to make it as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. I am deeply grateful to their Highnesses and to Sachivottama Sir C. P. Ramaswami Aiyar for having extended to me and to my party the hospitality of the State. Naturally this hospitality made my passage through Travancore — and it has been such a rush — free of difficulties and afforded me comforts which otherwise I should not have received. But more than to these high personages and the managers of this pilgrimage, our thanks

are due to those who were in actual charge of my day-to-day programme. For instance, the chauffeurs of the three cars that were placed at our disposal were unremitting in their attention, and I am happy to tell you that they did their work without a single untoward accident. They willingly did their work, never minding whether it was night or day. And so also did the cooks, for whom, I assure you, it was a laborious task to prepare our meals from stage to stage. We were never at one place for more than 24 hours. Almost invariably the breakfast had to be taken at one place, the lunch at another place and the dinner at a third place. But these cooks were ever ready for the tasks allotted to them. And there was the officer in charge of these who accompanied us from Trivandrum and supervised everything. He has been equally unremitting in his attention and studiously courteous. But for the hearty co-operation of all these friends whom I have named, we could not have negotiated this pilgrimage without any one of us getting ill.

And then I may not omit the Tahsildars at every place who were ready to render every assistance required. My thanks are due to every one of them and to others whom I may have inadvertently omitted to mention.

I am just reminded that I had neglected that necessary limb of the law, I mean the Police. The Police have not acted after the proverbial manner to which we are accustomed in India. They really acted in the most gentlemanly manner for which the Police in England are celebrated

throughout the world. Whatever Englishmen may be here in India, the English Police constable in England is really a gentleman. I understand that every morning when he is sent out on duty, he is required to repeat the formula that he is not a master but a servant of the people. He has to deal courteously with innumerable people with whom he has to come in daily contact and he may not handle even criminals roughly. And as English law, like all law, requires that no man should be considered guilty unless he is so adjudged by law, the Police in England are taught to be courteous even to people who may be found guilty of murder and caught red-handed. And so you understand what high praise I am bestowing on the Police here when I say that they behaved in the same gentlemanly manner as they behave in London. Naturally, therefore, they are entitled to the same thanks that I have given to the others I mentioned before.

Lastly, I would thank you the present audience and ask you not to forget that the carrying out of the Proclamation rests with every one of you individually.

PRAYER MEETINGS IN TEMPLES

Whenever we happened to be near a temple in the evening, we used to have our evening prayers on the temple precincts. Gandhiji explained everywhere in brief the meaning of the various parts of the prayer. This is what he said at these prayer meetings.]

I suppose it is true of temples in India—in the South as well as in the North—that there are courtyards attached to them where *bhajan* parties give their *bhajans* and teachers give their discourses. But what I propose to do here and what I have been doing for some days is somewhat different from what I have described to you.

Ever since my return to India we have had, in our Ashram and wherever I have gone, prayers about this time every evening, and I have been so very much enthused over my pilgrimage that I had been longing to have my prayers under the shadow of your grand temples. So I enquired of the trustees whether I could have a prayer meeting under the shadow of the presiding deity of the temple which I am visiting for the first time in my life. The permission was readily given and I am grateful to the trustees for it.

I shall now explain to you the various parts of the prayer we have every evening. I am going to commence by reciting the first verse of the *Ishopanishad* which I have been explaining at various meetings. I must give you the gist of the

verse which I consider to be the bedrock of Hinduism, without which Hinduism is nothing, and with which Hinduism need not be anything else. God the Creator and Ruler pervades every atom, ever so tiny, in the universe, and therefore seeing that it is all God's and God pervades everything, we have to surrender everything and renounce everything in His favour and eat or enjoy or use just what He gives from day to day. The verse closes by saying: 'Do not covet anybody's riches.' There is nothing so satisfying and beautiful in all the scriptures of the world as this *mantra* and it enunciates a universal truth applicable to all.

This will be followed by a recitation of the 19 last verses of the second chapter of the Bhagavadgita. They tell us what we should do to become good Hindus, how we should behave towards one another and towards ourselves.

Then since all cannot understand Sanskrit we have a simple *bhajan* or hymn from one of our saints who devised this beautiful medium to convey to us the essence of Hinduism. We draw our *bhajans* from the exhaustless store of Kabir, Tulsidas, Surdas, Nanak, Mirabai, Tyagaraja, Tukaram, and other saints of India.

But there are others who cannot understand even these simple *bhajans*, and so to direct their attention Godward we simply repeat the name of Rama.

And then since our recent penetration into the villages we have readings from Tulsidas' Ramayana which is one of the gems of our religious literature.

It is known to millions of villagers in North India, and its music is such that even listening to the chant will uplift you.

Now I hope you will follow the prayer somewhat intelligently.